

Faith-Based Leadership and Community Transformation: An Analysis of the “A12” Organizational Structure in Authentic World Ministries/Zion Temple Celebration Center

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ABSTRACT

In the current era, many emerging religious organizations are being established worldwide, while a significant number of churches also close each year. A clear example is the United States, where approximately 4,000 new churches are launched annually, while about 3,700 close. Globally, more than 140,000 churches have been planted over the past 25 years¹. Church leadership, the management of staff and followers, and the effective implementation of church ideology or doctrine remain key determinants of organizational growth or decline. Well-established Christian traditions such as the Roman Catholic Church, which traces its origins to Jesus Christ during the Roman occupation in the early 30s CE; the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which emerged from the Millerite movement of the 1830s–1840s and was formally organized in 1863 following the Great Disappointment; the Lutheran Church, founded in the early sixteenth century after Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517; and the Eastern Orthodox Church, which became a distinct entity following the Great Schism of 1054, are characterized by structured governance systems and firmly rooted doctrines. One of the management approaches and best practices commonly applied in many established churches is the small groups communion model. This approach enables churches to effectively manage their members, facilitate the internalization of doctrine, and foster strong commitment, engagement, and a sense of belonging among followers, thereby strengthening attachment to the church's founding beliefs and principles. Non-growing churches viewed both retaining young adults and small group participation as a more significant challenge than did growing churches². Authentic Word Ministry/Zion Temple Celebration Center, as a young yet impactful emerging church organization, applies a similar approach through its well-known “A12” small group structure. This paper aims to analyze opportunities for the development of church members and to identify the leadership model(s) required to enable the church to establish a supportive ecosystem. Within this framework, the “A12” structure functions as both an incubator and a catalyst for the spiritual and socio-economic development of its members

Keywords: Leadership, Community Development, Small Groups

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the nation faced an urgent need for healing at every level. Rwanda, as a unified country, had been deeply fractured, and its people were left traumatized and divided. The social fabric was torn apart, and the nation resembled a sinking ship struggling to stay afloat amid devastation and loss.

For Rwanda as a Nation and its people to recover, extraordinary and visionary leadership was required across all sectors. Rebuilding the country meant restoring both the economy, the trust, hope and unity of its citizens

¹ Lisa Cannon Green (2015): [America is launching new Protestant churches faster than it loses old ones, attracting many people who previously didn't attend anywhere.](#)

² Dunaetz, D. R. (2023): Growing and Declining Churches Face Different Challenges: A Statistical Analysis of the Top Ten Challenges Facing Churches Study

from the ashes of genocide. Hope for the future was fragile, and the spiritual and moral wounds remained raw. A dual approach addressing both socio-economic reconstruction and spiritual restoration became essential to national recovery.

The nation and its people turned to Psalm 121:1–2, which says, “I lift up my eyes to the mountains where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”³ Churches and faith-based institutions, among others, played a significant role in fostering healing and rebuilding communities. Authentic World Ministries / Zion Temple Celebration Center was among the churches that contributed meaningfully to this process. Through spiritual guidance, community support, and moral formation, it helped many Rwandans regain hope and encouraged the development of men and women committed to reconciliation, resilience, and the rebuilding of their country.

Zion Temple Celebration Centers are Worship Centers and revival-driven Churches planted by the Authentic Word Ministries International around the world according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This Ministry started its church planting program in 1999 in Kigali, Rwanda. Zion Temple Churches have been planted respectively: in Tanzania, Burundi, Congo, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, London, Brussels, France, China, USA, and Canada as indicated⁴.

Even as a relatively new church, Authentic Word Ministries/Zion Temple Celebration Center (ZTCC) has transformed lives, strengthened faith, and shaped the future of millions of people. For example, in Rwanda alone, significant impact was recorded within a single year, from 2024 to 2025: Authentic Word Ministries (AWM) and Zion Temple Celebration Center (ZTCC) emerged as catalysts of socio-economic transformation in Rwanda, distributing over Rwf1 billion in loans and creating more than 1,000 jobs for the youth across multiple sectors like education, finance, health, social welfare, media and more. Through its Micro-Finance Trust Capital KIRA Microfinance PLC in 2024 marked a turning point for grassroots finance in Rwanda. The institution now serves 4,718 clients, including individuals, businesses, and cooperatives, and has disbursed over Rwf1.05 billion in loans to individuals, Rwf112 million to businesses, and Rwf78 million to cooperatives⁵.

Globally, for effective management of church members, most congregations use small groups of people who gather consistently for a specific reason, for a set period of time, and are comprised of manageable number of people: between 4-12 people. According to surface to soul; the primary purposes for gathering in small groups is to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25 and 1 Thessalonians 4:18), love each other like brothers and sisters (Romans 12:10), help each other obey the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), pray for each other (James 5:16), serve each other (Galatians 5:13), and forgive each other (Colossians 3:13)⁶.

Authentic World Ministries / Zion Temple Celebration Center implements its leadership model and oversees its members through the “A12” structure across all Zion Temple branches; according to the Church, the A12 approach is justified as follows:

- **Purpose:** The church groups their community into "Authentic 12 families" along with relevant departments to foster closer fellowship and discipleship.
- **Context:** This structure is part of the Authentic Word Ministries / Zion Temple Celebration Centre.
- **Function:** The model is designed to organize members into smaller, more manageable units for spiritual growth

The leadership of the small groups remains an important factor in religion for enabling a transformation. The intended process of transformation is all the effort of religion to realize justice, welfare of life, and the

³ Holly Bible, Psalm 121:1–2

⁴ Zion Temple Celebration Center: <https://www.ztccedmonton.org/about>

⁵ The Newtimes: [Beyond the pulpit: A look at Authentic Word Ministries, Zion Temple Celebration Center holistic impact](#)

⁶ Surface to soul: [Small Groups Leadership Guide](#)

formation of civil society who is faithful, knowledgeable and has morality. According to Herrington, **spirituality and vital relations** are the heart and energy source of a transformation process. Without a sufficient level of spirituality and vitality, a religion will not be able to support the transformation process⁷.

This paper aims to analyze opportunities for the development of church members and to identify the leadership model(s) needed to enable the church to establish a supportive ecosystem. In this framework, the “A12” structures function as incubators and catalysts for both spiritual and socio-economic development among members.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a triangulated approach for this paper, first his personal experience as a member of the Church, secondly as a long term leader in the Not for Profit Organizations and their umbrella; the researcher was the spokesperson of the umbrella governing Civil Society Organizations in Rwanda and in the board of the Regional body, East Africa that bring together civil societies in the region. The researcher was the leader during the period when Zion Temple Celebration Center went through the most challenging internal conflicts.

The author has been a member of Zion Temple Celebration Center since 2000, having joined while pursuing university studies in the Southern Province of Rwanda. Following graduation, he became a member of the church's headquarters congregation in Kigali and later joined the Edmonton branch after relocating to Canada.

This study draws on the author's lived experience as a long-term member of the church, informed by more than fifteen years of systematic observation. To strengthen the rigor of the analysis, these observations were complemented by empirical data collection and comparative analysis with established Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In addition, a focused review of relevant literature was conducted to provide a broader understanding of church leadership and organizational development.

Although the author has maintained an active affiliation with the church throughout this period, he has primarily adopted the role of an observant participant. This position enabled him to develop balanced and objective perspectives on the evolution of a rapidly growing church that has had a significant impact on the lives of many people in Rwanda, across the region, and internationally.

The researcher also used analysis of renown media houses that wrote about this conflict; international media such British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and some internal media ; Inyarwanda.com and Umuryango.com both of them wrote a number of articles on this conflict within Zion Temple Celebration Cener. The researcher also corrected date and information during the training he conducted on “Leadership” for the A12 Groups Leaders in Edmonton, on March 8th, 2026, at Zion Celebration Center in Edmonton, and thereafter, the researcher conducted one on one interviews with these leaders and some church members.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demystifying the concept of “Leadership”

Leadership is a process by which a leader in a persuasive way or by example, influences his followers to achieve the aims of the group. In other words, leadership is a process of influencing activities in organized groups with their efforts to achieve goals and achievements⁸.

A widely accepted definition characterizes *leadership* as a process during which one person influences others by structuring task-related activities and by facilitating interpersonal relationships in the group to achieve

⁷ Anil. D. et al, (2017): Transformational leadership model in core values learning of faith based humanitarian organizations Wahana Visi Indonesia.

⁸ Stogdill RM. Leadership, membership and organization. *Psychol Bull* 1950;47:1–14.

shared goals or a vision of the future⁹. A *leader* is a person who occupies a formal or informal position that involves guiding the leadership process, and a *follower* is a person who accepts the leader as a legitimate source of guidance in the work context. *Leadership effectiveness* refers to the task-related and affective-relational outcomes of the leadership processes, which can be assessed at different levels of analysis and with regard to different evaluation targets (e.g., leader, follower, group, organization).

However, Leadership is one of the most complex and multi-dimensional phenomena. It has been studied extensively over the years and has taken on greater importance than ever before in today's fast-paced and increasingly globalised world. Nonetheless, leadership continues to generate captivating and confusing debate due to the complexity of the subject. Bennis notes that 'leadership is the most studied and least understood topic of any in the social sciences' and 'never have so many laboured so long to say so little'¹⁰

Secular versus spiritual orientation: The character of the churches' involvement in social development varies widely, from spiritual and gospel activities among some of the Pentecostal communities, to spiritual, community development and social service provision by the more established congregations.

Evolution of "Leadership Theory"¹¹

Trait era: Great Man theory (1840s) and trait theories (1930s–1940s)

In the 19th century, research on leadership was focused on the innate characteristics of a leader and on identifying the personality traits and other qualities of effective leaders. The core belief of the Great Man theory is that **leaders are born, not made or trained**. In other words, only a few, very rare, individuals possess the unique characteristics to be effective leaders and attain greatness by divine design. Examples were often drawn from popular historical figures such as Julius Caesar, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln and Napoleon Bonaparte. It was believed that these individuals were natural born leaders with innate characteristics of leadership, which enabled them to lead individuals while they shape the pages of history.

The Great Man theory then evolved into the trait theories. Trait theories argue that leaders can be born or made. In other words, that the traits of successful leaders can be either inherited or acquired through training and practice. The aim was to identify the right combination of characteristics that make an effective leader and focus was on studying the mental, social and physical traits of leaders. However, a consistent set of traits was not produced and by 1950, it appeared that there was little advantage in continuing with this approach and hence it was abandoned. Today, psychometric tools are an example of trait theory principles in action and are often used in staff recruitment. These tools highlight key personality traits and are used for personal performance and team development.

Behavioural era: behavioural theory (1940s–1950s)

Behavioural theory evolved from trait theories and asserts that leaders **are largely made, rather than born** and that behaviours can be learnt to ensure effective leadership. It puts emphasis on the actual behaviour of the leader and not on their traits or characteristics, but it largely ignores the situation and environment of the leader.

Research in this area resulted in different patterns of behaviour being grouped together and labelled as styles. This became a prevalent approach within management training perhaps the best-known being Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid. Today, this theory is exemplified in the numerous leadership-training programmes, which involve the development of leadership skills and behaviours, thus supporting the belief that **leadership is largely learnt**.

⁹ Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

¹⁰ Bennis WG. On becoming a leader. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009.

¹¹ Sihame. B et al (2020): Evolution of leadership theory

Situational era: contingent and situational theories (1960s)

It was later recognised that the environment plays a significant role in the leader-follower dynamic and this belief dominated the situational era. As the name suggests, the situational era is focused on leadership in particular situations, rather than on the traits or behaviours of leaders. This implies that leaders must be able to assess the context in which they operate and then decide what style will 'fit' the situation best. Because the best style is dependent on the situation, this approach is known as the contingency theory of leadership.

Fred Fiedler developed one of the first contingency theories of leadership. His theory focuses on the importance of context in effective leadership and supports the belief that there is no one best set of leadership traits or behaviours. However, Fiedler assert that because a leader's style is fixed, they should be put into situations that best match their style. In other words, effectiveness as a leader is determined by how well their leadership style matches a particular context.

New leadership era: transactional, transformational theories (1990s) and others (2000s)

For the first time, it was recognised that focusing on one aspect or dimension of leadership cannot address all the complexity of the phenomenon. In a world that has become more complex and challenging, a need emerged for leadership theories that support circumstances of rapid change, disruptive technological innovation and increasing globalisation. This led to the new leadership era, moving away from the above-mentioned traditional theories of leadership, which define leadership as a unidirectional, top-down influencing process, drawing a distinct line between leaders and followers. Instead, the focus became on the complex interactions among the leader, the followers, the situation and the system as a whole, with particular attention dedicated to the latent leadership capacities of followers.

Transactional and transformational theories

The above-mentioned context encouraged the popularity and adoption of two leadership theories: transformational and transactional theories and also gave rise to approaches such as the Lean strategy and agile methodology to help deal with the fast pace of change and increasing complexity of the challenges faced. *Transformational leadership* is a theory in which leaders encourage, inspire and motivate followers. This theory is used when an organisation needs to be revitalised, is undergoing significant change or requires a new direction. It is especially vital to today's fast-paced technological industry where innovation and agility can make or break an organisation.

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, relies on authority to motivate employees, the leader exchanges reward for follower effort and punishes any follower who fails to meet their goals. In this context, the follower's perception concerning fairness and equity of the exchange with the leader is vital. Transactional leadership works best in mature organisations that already have clearly defined structure and goals, to keep them on track, and reinforce the status quo.

Church Leadership and Conflicts

To lead is to struggle, in a world such as ours, in history as we know it, to choose the path of leadership is to be on a collision course with conflict¹². Congregational leadership has a higher standard in conflict situations as it seeks spiritual benefits for all stakeholders¹³. One of today's challenges is that 'Congregations need to change the way they do things if they want to reach and hold onto the new generations'¹⁴. Rendle observes

¹² Ford, L., 2008, Transforming leadership: Jesus' way of creating vision, shaping values & empowering change, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

¹³ Susek, R., 1999, Firestorm: Preventing and overcoming church conflicts, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

¹⁴ Nicholson, R.S., 1998, Temporary shepherds: A congregational handbook for interim ministry, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

that when change is required, more than ‘one idea’ is needed which produces conflict, the engagement of differences, out of which come energy, motivation, clarity and direction¹⁵. The common belief that changes equals conflict is challenged in Brubaker’s empirical work.

Brubaker contends that ‘Where there is change, there is conflict’ may be too simple a description. Where there are insufficiently planned changes to the core meaning-making functions and power relationships of the congregation, there is likely to be conflict may be a less memorable phrase...’, which Brubaker believes ‘... to be a more accurate conclusion’. It is not so much the ‘What’ but the ‘How’ of change that creates conflict. Bullard (2008:12) supports such an outlook by encouraging congregations not to be afraid of healthy conflict, but ‘... welcome it as an opportunity to bring forth positive spiritual and social change to the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the congregation’. Leaders are called to be peacemakers and not peacekeepers. Peacekeepers attempt to sweep things under the carpet, while peacemakers endeavor to sweep issues out the door (Susek 1999:126).

Conflicts will always exist, but the way they affect new and growing churches differs significantly from how they affect well-established and stable churches with strong systems in place. New and growing churches are often more vulnerable and fragile when dealing with conflicts that are generally considered inevitable in any organization. Therefore, church leaders must possess the skills and ability to identify conflicts early and address them before they become unmanageable and potentially divide the church.

Conflicts may arise both among church members and within the church leadership itself. The approaches and level of urgency required to address these conflicts may vary depending on their nature and context. In this regard, the professionalism, skills, experience, and maturity of church leaders play a critical role in effectively managing and resolving conflicts within their churches. The Authentic World Ministries/Zion Temple Celebration Center has experienced periods of internal conflict during its growth and development, as is common in many expanding organizations. One of the most notable episodes occurred between 2017 and highly mediatized in 2022 and 2023 and received attention in both local and international media; some examples, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)^{16, 17}, Inyarwanda.com¹⁸. During this period, six influential church leaders initiated legal proceedings against Dr. Apostle Paul Gitwaza. The case was subsequently reviewed by the courts and relevant regulatory authorities, including the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), the body responsible for overseeing non-profit and faith-based organizations in Rwanda. In 2024, court rulings and regulatory assessments concluded in favor of Dr. Apostle Paul Gitwaza, resulting in the dismissal of the claims brought against him¹⁹.

The consistency, transparency, and integrity demonstrated by the church leadership in both spiritual and organizational matters contributed significantly to navigating one of the most complex and challenging periods in the history of Zion Temple Celebration Center. The crisis, characterized by prolonged internal disputes and legal proceedings, had the potential to create substantial organizational instability and leadership challenges. However, through sustained leadership, strategic decision-making, and adherence to established legal and regulatory processes, the matter was ultimately resolved through judicial rulings and regulatory assessments that were favorable to Apostle Dr. Paul Gitwaza.

From an organizational and leadership perspective, this case provides valuable lessons for church members and leaders at all levels. It highlights the importance of effective leadership, conflict management, institutional governance, and organizational resilience during periods of crisis. As a result, the church could benefit from systematically documenting this experience and extracting key leadership principles and best practices to inform future leadership development and training programs

¹⁵ Rendle, G.R., 1998, Leading change in the congregation: Spiritual and organizational tools for leaders, Alban Institute, Washington, DC.

¹⁶ BBC (2023): Apôtre Gitwaza abo bashinganye Zion Temple bamugejeje mu rukiko: bamurega iki, barashaka iki?

¹⁷ BBC (2023): Rwanda: ‘Ni Satani yateye ishengero’ – Umuvugizi wa Zion Temple ya Gitwaza

¹⁸ Inyarwanda.com (2017): Zion Temple:Umuriro ugiye kwaka, Bishop Dieudonne avuga ko Gitwaza nta burenganzira afite bwo kumwirukana

¹⁹ Umuryango.com (2022): Apotre Paul Gitwaza yegujwe n’abo bashinganye Zion Temple,RGB ibitera utwatsi

Leadership in the divine scriptures

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to **fish for people**.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him²⁰.

A true leader saves, changes, and transforms lives. Such a leader shows compassion for others and consistently thinks on behalf of their followers. They strive for the well-being and betterment of others, regardless of the personal cost. A true leader places people first, before personal interests, embodying the spirit of service and selfless commitment to those they lead.

The righteous man, “Noah”

¹³ So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. ¹⁴ So make yourself an ark of cypress ^e wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. ¹⁵ This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. ^d ¹⁶ Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit ^e high all around. ^f Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷ I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you²¹.

A true leader must be **trustworthy** in all relationships with both superiors and subordinates. In the eyes of their superiors, they should be seen as capable, reliable individuals who can execute important assignments effectively and who **respect** and follow instructions. They demonstrate strong project management skills, with the ability to lead complex initiatives and manage resources efficiently and responsibly.

Moses: A Bearer of God’s Vision

¹⁶ “Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites a land flowing with milk and honey.’

¹⁸ “The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.’ ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go²².

Beyond being trustworthy, a true leader must also be a **bearer of the vision** entrusted to them. At every level of an organizational structure, those with leadership responsibilities should embody and advance the organization’s vision. This is especially critical within small groups that form the foundation of the organization. Group leaders must faithfully represent and align with the broader mission and purpose.

²⁰ Bible: New International Version (NIV): Mark 1:16-20

²¹ Bible: New International Version (NIV): Genesis 6:13-18

²² Bible: New International Version (NIV): Exodus 14:16-20

Any dysfunction, misalignment, or deviation from the church's overarching mission within these small groups can lead to unintended consequences, such as conflict, division, and, in extreme cases, fragmentation or dissolution of the organization if such issues spread across multiple groups. Conflict occurs when organizational members' ideas or experiences appear to be incompatible when attempting to achieve organizational goals²³.

Saul becomes Paul and a Missionary!

In Acts 9, we met a man named Saul. He was a Jewish scholar who at first was passionately persecuting the Christian church. He thought the news about Jesus being the promised Messiah was not true. However, while traveling to Damascus he met Jesus face to face. He became a believer, and he changed from being someone who wanted to stop the church from spreading the good news to being someone who gave his life to telling others about Jesus. Saul was his Jewish name. When the church made him a missionary and sent him out to tell others about Jesus, he became Paul which was his Greek name. He was reaching out to Jews and Gentiles (people who were not Jewish) so he went by his Greek name²⁴.

Importance of Church Doctrine and Role Modeling

Old and established churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, which traces its origins to Jesus during the period of Roman occupation in the early 30s CE; the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which emerged from the Millerite movement of the 1830s–1840s and was formally organized in 1863 following the “Great Disappointment”; The Lutheran Church that was founded in the early 16th century: October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in Wittenberg, Germany and the Eastern Orthodox Church, which became a distinct entity after the Great Schism of 1054, are all strong and well-established institutions. These churches are governed by structured systems and firmly rooted doctrines. This contrasts with newer-generation churches, which often operate based on the personal commitment and convictions of their members, as well as their appreciation of the church's top leadership, rather than solely on institutionalized structures and historical doctrines.

The Roman Catholic their doctrine is based on Scripture and Sacred Tradition, interpreted by the Magisterium, and centered on the Nicene Creed, the Trinity, and the seven sacraments. Key beliefs include the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, papal supremacy, the intercession of saints, and Marian dogmas (Immaculate Conception, Assumption)²⁵.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church holds 28 fundamental beliefs rooted in Protestant theology, emphasizing the Bible as the sole rule of faith (Sola Scriptura). Core doctrines include the imminent second coming of Jesus, observance of the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday), and a literal six-day creation²⁶.

The Lutheranism is a major Protestant tradition based on the teachings of Martin Luther, emphasizing salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ, and the authority of Scripture alone (Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Sola Scriptura). It centers on the Trinity, the doctrine of justification, and the real presence of Christ in the sacraments²⁷.

Zion Temple Celebration Centers are worship and revival-driven churches planted by Authentic Word Ministries International under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The ministry began its church-planting program in 1999 in Kigali, Rwanda. Since then, Zion Temple churches have been established in Tanzania, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, London, Brussels, France, China, the United States, and Canada.

²³ McSwain, L. L., & Treadwell, W. C. (1981). Conflict ministry in the church. Broadman Press.

²⁴ The New Covenant: [Saul becomes Paul a Missionary](#)

²⁵ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano (1993): Catechism of the Catholic Church

²⁶ Seventh Day Adventist Church (2026): What do Seventh Day Adventists Believe?

²⁷ Manos, John K. (2020): Lutheranism

The preaching and communion style of Authentic Word Ministries, along with the leadership of Dr. Apostle Muhirwa Paul Gitwaza are guided by a church vision built upon three interconnected and intertwined objectives:

- i) To preach the authentic word of God based on the truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures in order to equip and empower believers, spiritually, economically, socially, and several other arenas of life.
- ii) To raise an army of intercessors to contend for the manifestation of God's Kingdom on earth. To promote a Spirit of revival (repentance, fasting and prayer...)
- iii) To reactivate the different gifts and ministries that God has imparted to the Church.

The Church's beliefs are grounded in 16 foundational points. These core doctrines should be clearly understood by all members, who are encouraged to embrace them fully and be prepared to share and communicate them with others.

Both current and future members of Zion Temple should align with these 16 belief statements. Comprehensive awareness and consistent teaching of these principles should be ensured across all Zion Temple A12 groups worldwide, so that members are well grounded in the Church's doctrine and mission.

1. Believing in GOD,

We believe in one God | One God | eternally existing in the three persons (commonly known as the Trinity); namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The one true God has revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent "I AM," the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed Himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2

2. The Scriptures Inspired

We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible | The Scriptures are inspired by God and declare His design and plan for mankind. The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments (66 books), are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct. 2 Timothy 3:13-17, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

3. The Fall of man

We believe that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sin. | Man was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." However, man by voluntary transgression fell and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. Genesis 1:26-27; 2:17; 3:6-7; Romans 3:23; 5:12-21;

4. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

We believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ | Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceive of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That, as God's son Jesus was both human and divine. He was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead; He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessory. His virgin birth: Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:31, Luke 1:35 His sinless life: Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 2:22 His miracles: Acts 2:22, Acts 10:38 His substitutionary work on the cross: 1 Corinthians 15:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21 His bodily resurrection from the dead: Matthew 28:6, Luke 24:39, 1 Corinthians 15:4 His exaltation to the right hand of God: Acts 1:9-11, 2:33, Philippians 2:9-11, Heb 1:3 His ministry of intercession: Hebrew 7:24-25

5. Salvation of Man

We believe that every person can have restored fellowship with God through 'Salvation' Salvation, Justification, regeneration and the new birth are wrought by faith through the blood of Jesus. Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Romans 10.8-13; 1Corinthians 15.3-4, Acts 26.18; Titus 2.11, Romans 8.16, Ephesians 4.24, Galatians 5.22

6. Sanctification

We believe in the sanctification | Sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost, The holiness is to be God's standard of living for His people. Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God. Romans 12:1-2, 2 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 12:14, 23; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2; 15-16; 1Thess.5.22, 1 John2.6.

7. Baptism and Holy Communion

We believe in the Ordinances of the Church: Baptism in Water and Holy Communion Baptism in Water | the ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded by the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Saviour and Lord are to be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life. Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, Acts 10:47, 48, Romans 6:4 Holy Communion | The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements --bread and the fruit of the vine-- is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4), a memorial of his suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26), and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26), and is enjoined on all believers "till He come!"

8. The Baptism of the of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Special Experience Following Salvation | The Baptism in the Holy Ghost empowers believers for witnessing and effective service today, just as it did in New Testament times. Among the physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the speaking of tongues. Acts 2.4-8, 38-39, Acts 1.8,10, 44-46, 19.6

9. Spiritual Gifts

We believe that the Holy Spirit bestows the gifts to the believers | Believers who accept the validity of these gifts touched the lives of both believers and the unbelievers. 1Corinthinas.12.1-14; 14, Ephesians 4.11-12

10. Deliverance

We believe that a man can be under the control of the power of darkness; therefore, he needs deliverance. | A believer can be under control of the devil and evil spirits through heredity curses, un-confessed sin. Though sometimes this bondage cannot prevent someone to inherit the eternal life but can hinder him from living an abundant, prosperous and victorious life. We therefore believe that God has given to the church the authority over demons and the power to rebuke all the power of darkness that exercises their influence to the people of God; and the authority to bind and rebuke the demons and declare the inner and physical healing in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Matthew 18:18; Mark 5.6-13, 9. 14-27, Acts 8:13-24; 16.16-17, John 11.43-44.

11. The Church

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ | The church is an assembly of the believers who confess their faith in Jesus Christ. It is built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The doctrines and practices of the church are based upon His teachings. The church has a mission to seek and save all who are lost in sin; and to be the light and the salt of the world. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven. Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:22, Hebrews 12:23, Acts 2: 41-42, 1Corinthians 10: 16-17,

12. The fivefold ministry

We believe in the fivefold ministry | The fivefold ministry is still working today –Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher was given by God to equip the church for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-16

13. Hope

We believe in the blessed hope | The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the church. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Romans 8:18-25; Titus 2:13, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Revelation 20.11.

14. The Millennial Reign of Christ

We believe in the Millennial Reign of Christ | Jesus will return with His saints at His second coming and begins His benevolent rule over earth for 1,000 years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace. Zechariah 14:5, Matthew 24:27,30; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-14; 20:1-6; Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalms 72:3-8, Micah 4:3-4

15. Judgement

We believe that a final judgment will take place | There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to the everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Matthew 25:46, Mark 9:43-48, Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:11-15

16. New Heavens and a New Earth

We believe in the perfect coming of New Heavens and a New Earth | New Heavens and New Earth that Christ is preparing for all people, of all time, who have accepted Him as Lord and Saviour of their lives and they shall live and dwell with Him forever in Eternity. 'And so shall we forever be with the Lord!' Revelation 21:1²⁸

Apostle Dr. Paul M. Gitwaza is rooted in the Word of God. he is a seasoned preacher, motivator, talented, and anointed to bring revival, deliverance and transformation. His deep insight and keen eyesight have brought him to become a leader and advisor to many leaders, and different organizations. He is a man not only known for serving God but also for the passion and drive that he brings to everything he commits to do in life²⁹.

Since founding Authentic Word Ministries, now known as Zion Temple Celebration Center, Apostle Gitwaza has demonstrated remarkable charismatic and visionary leadership. Throughout the church's growth and development, he has maintained consistency in character, commitment to his vision, and focus on organizational excellence. From its inception, he established a clear strategic direction and developed leadership structures that integrated both administrative and spiritual dimensions of church governance.

Under his leadership, hundreds of pastors and bishops have been ordained, and thousands of church members have been baptized worldwide. His leadership approach has emphasized mentorship, discipleship, and role modeling, contributing significantly to the church's expansion and organizational cohesion across multiple countries. The visionary leadership principles demonstrated by Apostle Gitwaza have been reflected throughout the church's organizational structures and could be further strengthened through broader integration within the "A12" discipleship groups to enhance leadership development, accountability, and organizational sustainability.

²⁸ Authentic Word Ministries: [Beliefs](#)

²⁹ AWMAmerica: [Apostle Dr. Paul M. Gitwaza](#)

Failure to uphold and effectively implement the church's doctrine, Authentic Word, and to follow the foundational vision established by Dr. Paul Gitwaza may result in leadership divergence, which can eventually lead to confusion, conflict, and organizational separation. While such challenges may sometimes be unavoidable in growing organizations, they underscore the importance of continuous leadership development and capacity-building initiatives within the church.

If it happens that the church faces internal conflicts, which is unavoidable as Mayer's³⁰ stated that 'conflict is inevitable' and 'how it is handled is important'³¹. And there is common perception that states, 'Christians don't fight'³², observation and experience find that conflict can arise at any point and time of being, becoming and cultivating church. A few common conflict-related aspects of church life are addressed.

Therefore, fulfilling the calling of being church in this present age must begin with a responsible, truthful and realistic evaluation and image of its current state, as there is no value in planning for the future if the congregation cannot describe who they are currently and who they have been in the past³³.

A focus on Transformational Leadership

The term of transformational leadership was originally exclaimed by Downton (1973) which emerged as an important approach to leadership that begins with classical work by the political sociologist James MacGregor Burns, entitled Leadership (1978). In his mind, Burns associated the role of leadership and followers. Leaders are the ones who increase followers' motives to achieve goals and make the followers better. Burns divides the two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transformational leadership is the process by which people engage with others and create relationships that increase motivation and morality in leaders and followers. Because there is a charge of increasing morality, the conceptualization of transformational leadership is social and caring for the common good, defeating the interests of the leader for the good of others³⁴.

Transformational leaders are tasked to bringing about human and economic transformation. In the organization they produce vision, mission, goals and culture that can contribute to the ability of individuals, groups and organizations to "practice values and achieve their goals" (Hickman, 1997). These leaders are reliable leaders who can generate commitment from their followers and generate a sense of common purpose (Waddock & Post, 1991). Leaders are able to inspire, motivate, and practice commitment to common goals is very important³⁵.

Components of Transformational Leadership

There are much evidence to support that transformational leadership can drive followers to go beyond expected work performance and bring followers to a higher level of satisfaction and increase their commitment to groups and organizations (Bass 1985, 1998a).

1. Influence of Idealizing Leaders

The influencing factor of idealizing the leader according to Northouse, citing the opinion of Antonakis, is a factor referred to as charisma or the ideal influence that is related to the emotional component of leadership (Antonakis, 2012). Ideal influence describes a leader who acts as a powerful example for followers and conversely associates himself with a leader and desperately wants to imitate it.

³⁰ Mayer, B., 2010, The dynamics of conflict resolution: A practitioner's guide, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, CA.

³¹ Nel, M., 2015, Identity-driven Churches: Who are we and where are we going?, Biblecor, Wellington, South Africa.

³² Cosgrove, C.H. & Hatfield, D.D., 1994, Church conflict: The hidden systems behind the fights, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN.

³³ Derek L. et al (2018), Conflict resolution and reconciliation within congregations

³⁴ Howell, J. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, locus of control and support for innovation: Key predictors of consolidated-business-unit performance.

³⁵ Bernard M. Bass, David A. Waldman (1987): Transformational Leadership and the Falling Dominoes Effect.

2. Inspirational Motivation (MI)

Leaders who are positioned in inspirational motivation within the group encourage their subordinates to be more creative and innovative to develop themselves and also promote the trust and value of leaders. Followers should test new approaches and also develop new ways to adapt to the work environment. They are supported in asking their assumptions, beliefs, and values (Bass and Avolio, 1990).

3. Intellectual Stimulation (SI)

Transformational leaders stimulate their followers to be innovative and creative by asking assumptions, reframing existing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Subordinate creativity is supported and there is no public criticism of individual mistakes from group members. Followers are expected to give new ideas and creative solutions to the problems. Providing stimulus to followers to be more innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, problem solving, and problem solving in new ways. (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

4. Giving Attention as Subject to Each Individuals

This factor emphasizes leaders who can motivate followers to share their views and engage directly in that view. Team spirit is awakened, enthusiasm and optimism are also shown. Leaders use emotional symbols and appeal in order to create team spirit and to encourage subordinates to achieve goals, which will not be possible alone. An inspirational leader communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus on the follower's effort and expresses important values in a simple way (Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders pay particular attention to the need to excel and grow from each follower by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers or peers are developed to achieve ever increasing levels of potential. When opportunities to learn new things with a supportive atmosphere are created, there will also be attention to each follower.

Small groups the foundation for community development

According to Bill Scheidler³⁶ Because of the obvious strengths of the small group ministry in the local church many pastors have come home from a church growth seminar with great plans to grow their church through small groups only to face disappointment and, in some cases, ruin. Part of the problem is that small group ministry or any other thing that is added to the program of the church cannot just be tacked on to an already full ministry program.

In addition, it will take a long time for the people in the church to get comfortable with a ministry that forces them to get out of their traditional comfort zone and enter a small setting where they will become vulnerable to others. As a result, some pastors have given up in the process.

Some pastors have gone into such programs not being totally convinced, not counting the ultimate cost or not laying the proper foundation for change. In order to minimize some of the negative effects I have done a rather thorough study of those churches that seem to be doing well with small group ministry, that have been doing it for a good length of time and who seem to be having the desired success, the following are nine common denominators of the most successful small group churches.

1. The small group ministry is seen as the main program of the church.

Small groups are not an add-on to an otherwise full schedule of activities in the church. If you add small groups, you will have to eliminate other phases of church life that you presently have in motion. Otherwise, there will be a constant competition for leadership and some of the people will use their other fulfilling involvements as an excuse not to get involved in the small group ministry.

³⁶ Bill Scheidler: [Small Group Leaders Training Manual](#)

2. The small group ministry must be led, fanned, and envisioned by the senior leadership of the church.

It is a fact that eighty percent of the success of small group ministry is dependent on the senior pastor of the local church. This is not an area that will succeed in a corner and it cannot be delegated to a few fanatics who want to move out on their own in this area. In order for small groups to succeed there must be much pulpit time given to casting a clear vision. There must be ongoing exhortations and testimonies, which will require time in the corporate gathering. This also means that the senior pastor will have to get personally involved in the training of key leaders. But most of all it means that every leader in the church from the top down will have to be committed to personal involvement in the groups.

3. The small groups must meet fairly often.

If the small group is going to have any chance to fulfill the purposes for which it was established, it will have to meet fairly often, the senior pastor will have to look at the overall program of the church to see that the small group are not in competition with a full schedule of weekly services. When adding small groups to the program of the church it should most likely replace one of the other happenings in the program of the church.

4. The small groups must be growth orientated.

One of the greatest difficulties that you will have is multiplying groups. Part of the problem is that people become comfortable in their group and they want things to stay just the way they like them. It's ironical, but groups that do not birth new groups end up becoming ingrown and usually dissolve after about 2-3 years. All groups should be open to new people at all times or they should have a natural life cycle because of the unique purpose of that specific group. Birthing new groups should be seen as a primary purpose from the very beginning. It is even helpful to put goals out that reflect this.

5. The small groups must become the vehicles through which most care ministry occurs.

Again, when you structure the church around small groups those small groups become ministry centers. You can handle just about everything regarding ministry to the believer through this channel including personal discipleship, visitor follow-up, pastoral care, hospital visitation, wedding and baby showers and even evangelistic endeavors.

6. The small groups must be small in size.

If the small groups are going to succeed at the purposes for which they are designed, the smaller they are the better. The average size of the small groups should be around 10-12 adults. Once you get to a maximum of 15-16 adults, that group should birth a new group. If a group gets too large most homes become a problem, you can end up with too many children and it ceases to be conducive for adding new members to the group. It can actually become more like a small local church, which is obviously not the goal.

7. The small groups must become the center for the release of the body ministry in the church.

The small group is the care unit of the church where the members of the group take care of the needs of one another. This is where all of the one another's of body life can take place. This is where the members love one another in tangible ways. They comfort one another, they pray for one another, they edify one another, and they pour out their lives for one another.

8. The small groups must exist for building relationships and a caring, nurturing community both for believers and the newly converted.

Sometimes where small groups get into trouble is when they are used as the primary means for equipping the saints and training leaders. These are functions of the five leadership ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher (Eph. 11:13). Not every small group will have this level of ministry within them and can end up in error if they try to function in this way. In addition the small group is not to become a place of group

therapy or counseling. Those kinds of issues are best handled privately with proper pastoral oversight. The small groups should be focusing on serving the needs of the people coming into the groups.

9. The small group must be a priority function of all of the leadership of the church and every single staff person in the church.

The small groups will not be a success if they are not fully supported by the leadership of the church and other staff members. It will soon be interpreted that if you are more mature or when you have “arrived” that you no longer need the small group. Not only that, but people are more inclined to follow your example rather than your words. All leaders should be actively involved in the small group ministry, and they should seriously consider leading such a group.

According to Leadership Development (2023) for **Leadership of small groups**, a person who leads a small group has five areas of responsibility³⁷:

- Be **connected** – whether the groups are part of a church, an organisation or friendship groups, it’s important to stay in tune with their goals and values if they have them – and if not create some yourselves.
- Have **character** – the number one quality employees are looking for in their leaders is integrity and it’s no different in a small group. If people know you are honest and sincere, they will be able to trust you and respect your leadership.
- Embrace the **culture** – understands the culture or cultures you are working with and how to greet and meet and go deeper in relationship. It’s helpful to know the speed of growth and development and how quickly you can integrate new ideas and customs into the group.
- Good **chemistry** – this is seen clearly when there is a flow of communication, and a bonding takes place easily. Good chemistry happens when the leader is approachable, relaxed, and welcoming to everyone.
- A level of **competence** – it takes more than just having a desire to see a group come about, you need a passion and skill to serve, draw people out and create a positive atmosphere for effective connections.

Summary

This paper examines how leadership models within church structures can serve as effective instruments for community development, using the **A12 small-group structure** implemented by Authentic Word Ministries / Zion Temple Celebration Center (ZTCC) as a case study. It argues that while many churches are established worldwide, organizational sustainability largely depends on leadership effectiveness, doctrinal clarity, and member engagement systems. Drawing lessons from historically established Christian institutions, the study highlights small-group ministry as a proven governance and discipleship approach that strengthens belonging, commitment, and organizational growth. Within this framework, the A12 structure organizes church members into manageable spiritual families that promote discipleship, accountability, and community cohesion.

The paper situates the emergence of Authentic Word Ministries within the post-1994 Genocide against the Tutsi context in Rwanda, where churches played a critical role in spiritual healing, reconciliation, and socio-economic reconstruction. Beyond spiritual restoration, the ministry contributed to tangible development outcomes through employment creation, microfinance initiatives, and youth empowerment programs. The study integrates leadership theory ranging from trait and behavioral theories to situational and transformational leadership with biblical leadership models exemplified by figures such as Jesus, Noah, and Moses. It emphasizes that effective church leadership requires vision transmission, moral credibility, doctrinal

³⁷ Leadership Development (2023): [Are you building community through small groups?](#)

alignment, and continuous leadership development across all organizational levels, particularly within small groups.

From the perspective of what the church through in line with internal conflicts and how they were handled, this paper recommend that Zion Temple Celebration Center should formally document and analyze the leadership and governance lessons derived from major organizational crises and integrate them into its leadership development framework. This process should include the preparation of case studies, training materials, and governance guidelines that can be used to strengthen leadership capacity, conflict resolution skills, organizational accountability, and institutional resilience among church leaders at all levels. By transforming this experience into a learning opportunity, the church can enhance its preparedness for future challenges and promote sustainable organizational growth.

Ultimately, the paper identifies transformational leadership as the most suitable framework for sustaining both spiritual growth and community development within emerging churches. The A12 model functions as an incubator for leadership formation, social support, and economic empowerment by fostering close relationships, mentorship, and shared responsibility among members. The study concludes that when small groups become the operational core of church life supported by strong doctrine, visionary leadership, and structured training, they can evolve into powerful ecosystems that advance holistic transformation, combining faith formation with social and economic development outcomes.

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