



African Gospel Churches in Swansea

Socio-Cultural, Theological, and Diaspora Contributions

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ABSTRACT

The growth of African Christian communities in Europe has contributed to the changing religious and social landscape of migrant societies. Within the United Kingdom, African Gospel and Pentecostal churches have increasingly served not only as places of worship but also as spaces where faith, cultural identity, social relationships, pastoral care, and migrant belonging are negotiated and expressed. However, relatively limited attention has been given to the experiences and contributions of African Gospel churches within the Welsh context, particularly in Swansea. This study examines the socio-cultural, theological, and diaspora contributions of selected African Gospel churches in Swansea. Adopting a qualitative case-study approach, the research draws on a semi-structured online questionnaire, participant observation, and documentary materials to explore how these churches understand and practise their religious identity, maintain cultural connections, support members, and engage with the wider Swansea community. The study considers the churches as both religious communities and social spaces within which African Christian identities are maintained, adapted, and expressed in a Welsh urban context. Particular attention is given to worship and theological practices, cultural continuity, pastoral support, community relationships, and the experiences of migration and diaspora. The study contributes to scholarship on African Christianity, Pentecostalism, diaspora ecclesiology, and migrant religious communities by bringing the Swansea context into wider discussions of African Christianity in Britain. It argues that African Gospel churches provide an important context for examining the interaction between Christian faith, African cultural identity, migration, and community life within contemporary Wales.

Keywords: African Christianity; African Gospel Churches; Pentecostalism; Christian Diaspora; Migration; Religious Identity; Swansea; Wales; Diaspora Ecclesiology; Community Engagement

1. Introduction

The growth of African Christian communities in Britain has become an important feature of the country's changing religious landscape. African Pentecostal and Gospel churches have established congregations across Britain and have become significant spaces in which Christian faith is practised alongside experiences of migration, cultural identity, community life, and belonging. Research on African Pentecostalism in Britain has shown that church life cannot be understood only in terms of worship and religious belief. Migration, relationships, social circumstances, identity, and everyday experiences also shape how African Christians experience and practise their faith in Britain.¹

African Gospel churches are particularly significant because they provide spaces where Christian faith and cultural identity can be expressed together. African Pentecostal churches in Britain are not a single, uniform movement. Their practices and expressions are influenced by national identities, cultural backgrounds, denominational traditions, and the circumstances of migrant life. Samushonga and Sande demonstrate that culture, ethnicity, and national identity can shape the theological practices and expressions of UK-African diaspora churches.² This suggests that the experience of African Christianity in Britain involves both continuity with African Christian traditions and adaptation to the social and cultural environment in which churches are located.

The relationship between faith, culture, and belonging is also important within diaspora communities. Churches can provide social and spiritual environments in which migrants develop relationships, maintain cultural connections, and find forms of belonging in their new surroundings. Cazarin's study of African Pentecostal diaspora communities, for example, shows how migrant-initiated churches can create social and spiritual spaces that support integration and belonging within diasporic networks.³ In the British context, Stockland similarly demonstrates how relationships within African Pentecostal churches are connected to the wider experiences of African migrants, including community formation, religious identity, social relationships, and the challenges of everyday life in Britain.⁴

These observations are particularly relevant to understanding African Gospel churches beyond the major metropolitan centres that have received much attention in existing scholarship. Studies of African Pentecostalism in Britain have provided important insights into migration, identity, theology, community formation, and religious practice, but there remains value in examining how these processes are experienced within specific local contexts. A locally grounded study can reveal how broader patterns identified in the literature are expressed, adapted, or experienced differently within a particular community.

Swansea provides an important context for such an examination. As a Welsh city with its own social, cultural, and religious setting, Swansea offers an opportunity to consider how African Gospel churches function within a context that differs from the large English urban centres more commonly represented in research on African Pentecostalism in Britain. Examining these churches at a local level makes it possible to explore not only their religious practices but also their contribution to cultural continuity, pastoral relationships, community support, social engagement, and the experiences of African migrants and their families.

1 Katharine Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain: Migration, Inclusion, and the Prosperity Gospel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 1-170

2 Hartness M. Samushonga and Nomatter Sande, "Doing Diaspora Practical Theology: Insights into How Culture, Ethnicity and National Identity Shape Theological Practices and Expressions of UK-African Diaspora Churches," *Practical Theology* 13, nos. 1-2 (2020): 109-122.

3 Rafael Cazarin, "The Social Architecture of Belonging in the African Pentecostal Diaspora," *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 440.

4 Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain*.

This study therefore examines the socio-cultural, theological, and diaspora contributions of three African Gospel Churches in Swansea: the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Swansea; Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Swansea; and Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Swansea. It explores how these churches understand and practise their Christian faith, maintain and negotiate cultural identity, support members, respond to experiences of migration, and engage with the wider Swansea community.

The study is based on qualitative research involving a semi-structured online questionnaire with open-ended questions, participant observation, and documentary analysis. By bringing these sources of evidence together, the research seeks to provide a locally grounded account of African Gospel church life in Swansea. Rather than presenting African Gospel churches simply as places of worship or as extensions of churches in Africa, the study considers them as communities in which Christian faith, cultural identity, migration experiences, pastoral relationships, and community life intersect.

The study contributes to scholarship on African Christianity, Pentecostalism, diaspora Christianity, and migrant religious communities by bringing the Swansea experience into these wider discussions. Its particular contribution lies in examining how African Gospel churches operate within a Welsh urban context and how their religious, cultural, pastoral, and community roles are experienced by those who participate in them.

2. Literature Review

2.1 African Christianity and the Development of Diaspora Churches

African Christianity has become an important part of the changing religious landscape of Europe and Britain. The migration of African Christians has contributed to the establishment of churches that maintain significant connections with African Christian traditions while operating within new social and cultural environments. African Pentecostal churches in Britain therefore provide an important setting for examining the relationship between Christianity, migration, identity, and community formation.

Sande and Samushonga observe that the migration of people from Africa to the United Kingdom has contributed to the emergence and establishment of African Pentecostal churches within Britain. Their study also draws attention to the need for such churches to respond to the cultural environment in which they operate.⁵ This is important because diaspora churches cannot simply be understood as churches transplanted from one geographical setting to another. Their practices develop within the circumstances of migration and within relationships with the wider society.

Stockland's study of African Pentecostalism in Britain similarly places migration and community formation alongside religious identity and practice. Her ethnographic research demonstrates that the experiences of African Pentecostal Christians in Britain are closely connected to everyday issues such as relationships, work, social circumstances, and belonging.⁶ African Pentecostal churches can therefore be understood as both religious communities and social environments in which migrants negotiate different aspects of their lives.

2.2 Culture, Ethnicity, and Religious Identity

Culture and religious identity are closely connected within African diaspora churches. Worship practices, language, music, forms of prayer, preaching, fellowship, and patterns of social

⁵ Nomatter Sande and Hartness M. Samushonga, "African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption in a Changing World," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 1 (2020): 17-31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2020.1714137>.

⁶ Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain*.

interaction may carry cultural meanings alongside their religious significance. Samushonga and Sande argue that culture, ethnicity, and national identity can shape the theological practices and expressions of UK-African diaspora churches.⁷

This relationship between Christianity and culture should not, however, be understood as static. African Pentecostal churches in Britain operate within culturally diverse environments and may adapt aspects of their practices in response to their surroundings. Sande and Samushonga's study of African Pentecostal ecclesiastical practices shows how a UK African Pentecostal denomination sought to alter aspects of its cultural practices and expressions in order to facilitate cross-cultural ministry and mission.⁸

The literature therefore points towards a relationship between cultural continuity and cultural adaptation. African Gospel churches may preserve important cultural practices while also responding to the social environment in which they worship and serve. This provides a useful framework for examining how the churches in Swansea maintain African cultural identity while interacting with the wider Welsh context.

2.3 Diaspora, Belonging, and Community Formation

Belonging is another important theme within the literature on African Pentecostal diaspora communities. Migration can involve changes in family relationships, social networks, employment, cultural surroundings, and patterns of community life. Churches may become important spaces through which migrants establish or rebuild relationships in their new environments.

Cazarin's study of African Pentecostal communities in Johannesburg and Bilbao describes migrant-initiated churches as providing a social and spiritual platform through which African worshippers experience integration and belonging.⁹ His work is particularly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that the contribution of diaspora churches extends beyond formal religious activities. Fellowship groups, interpersonal relationships, and shared religious practices can become part of the social organisation through which migrants experience community.

Stockland also identifies community formation as an important dimension of African Pentecostal life in Britain. Her research shows how relationships between African migrants and fellow Christians are connected to the wider challenges and uncertainties of everyday life in Britain.¹⁰ This suggests that the church may function simultaneously as a religious community, a social network, and a source of relationships through which members navigate their lives as migrants.

2.4 Transnational Connections and the British Context

African diaspora churches often maintain connections that extend beyond the immediate location of the congregation. Relationships between churches and individuals in Britain and Africa may involve communication, religious ideas, leadership relationships, financial support, visits, and other forms of exchange. Such connections are relevant to understanding diaspora Christianity because the religious life of migrant communities can remain connected to more than one geographical setting.

7 Hartness M. Samushonga and Nomatter Sande, "Doing Diaspora Practical Theology: Insights into How Culture, Ethnicity and National Identity Shape Theological Practices and Expressions of UK-African Diaspora Churches," *Practical Theology* 13, nos. 1-2 (2020): 109-122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1738673>.

8 Sande and Samushonga, "African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption," 17-31.

9 Rafael Cazarin, "The Social Architecture of Belonging in the African Pentecostal Diaspora," *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 440, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070440>.

10 Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain*.

The literature on African Pentecostalism in Britain demonstrates that churches operate within this wider environment of migration and transnational relationships. At the same time, the existence of connections with Africa does not mean that diaspora churches remain unchanged. The British social environment creates new circumstances in which religious practices and identities are expressed.

This tension between continuity and adaptation is important for the present study. The churches examined in Swansea are connected to wider African Christian traditions, yet they also operate within a Welsh city and engage with people whose cultural and religious backgrounds may differ from those of the majority of their members. The study therefore considers diaspora Christianity as a lived experience shaped by both inherited traditions and the circumstances of life in Swansea.

2.5 Mission, Social Engagement, and Local Community

The literature also demonstrates that African Pentecostal churches may engage with the wider societies in which they are located. Fesenmyer's study of Kenyan Pentecostals in London, for example, examines how a diaspora church understood its presence in the city through ideas of mission and placemaking. The study shows how religious activity can contribute to the creation of social spaces and to the way a church understands its relationship with the locality in which it is situated.¹¹

This perspective is relevant to African Gospel churches in Swansea because it allows the church to be considered not only in terms of internal congregational life but also in terms of its relationship with the surrounding community. Activities such as community outreach, welfare support, youth engagement, partnerships, and participation in local initiatives can create points of contact between migrant churches and the wider society.

Such engagement also raises questions about how African Gospel churches understand their mission in a diaspora context. Mission may involve evangelism and religious teaching, but it can also be expressed through relationships, service, hospitality, and participation in community life. The present study therefore examines community engagement alongside worship, cultural identity, and pastoral support.

2.6 Theological and Pastoral Practice in the Diaspora

Theological and pastoral practice provides another important dimension of African Gospel church life. The experience of migration can create practical and emotional needs that influence how churches understand their pastoral responsibilities. Members may seek spiritual guidance alongside support with relationships, employment, settlement, family circumstances, and other challenges associated with life in a new country.

Stockland's research is particularly useful here because it connects Pentecostal religious experience with the everyday circumstances of African migrants in Britain.¹² Rather than separating theology from ordinary life, her work shows how religious belief and relationships within Pentecostal communities are experienced in connection with the practical realities faced by migrants.

The work of Samushonga and Sande likewise demonstrates that theological and ecclesiastical practices are shaped by the environment in which African Pentecostal churches operate.¹³ This provides a basis for examining how the churches in Swansea express Christian faith through worship, pastoral relationships, cultural practices, and engagement with the wider community.

11 Leslie Fesenmyer, "Bringing the Kingdom to the City: Mission as Placemaking Practice amongst Kenyan Pentecostals in London," *City & Society* 31, no. 1 (2019): 34–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12196>.

12 Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain*.

13 Sande and Samushonga, "African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption," 17–31.

2.7 The Welsh Context and the Research Gap

The literature reviewed above provides valuable insight into African Pentecostalism, migration, identity, belonging, community formation, and mission in Britain and other European settings. However, much of the scholarship considered here examines Britain at a broad level or focuses on particular urban contexts such as London. Fesenmyer's study, for example, focuses specifically on Kenyan Pentecostals in London, while Stockland's work examines African Pentecostalism across Britain.¹⁴

These studies provide an important foundation, but they do not remove the value of examining individual local contexts. The social and cultural environment of a Welsh city cannot simply be assumed to reproduce the circumstances found in London or other major English cities. A study focused on Swansea can therefore contribute a more locally grounded perspective on how African Gospel churches experience and respond to their particular environment.

The present study addresses this local research gap by examining three African Gospel Churches in Swansea: the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Swansea; Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Swansea; and Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Swansea. It explores their socio-cultural, theological, pastoral, and diaspora contributions through written responses to a semi-structured online questionnaire, participant observation, and documentary analysis. By focusing on these churches within the specific social and cultural context of Swansea, the study seeks to show how African Christian communities maintain religious and cultural traditions while responding to the realities of life within a Welsh setting.

2.8 Summary of the Literature Gap

The literature demonstrates that African Gospel and Pentecostal churches in diaspora settings can serve several interconnected functions. They are places of Christian worship and theological practice, but they can also provide environments for cultural expression, community formation, social relationships, belonging, pastoral support, and engagement with the wider society.

The literature also indicates that African diaspora churches operate through a continuing process of cultural continuity and adaptation. African Christian traditions remain significant, while migration and the surrounding social environment create new circumstances in which those traditions are expressed.

What remains important, therefore, is to examine how these broader themes are experienced within specific local communities. This study contributes to that discussion by focusing on African Gospel Churches in Swansea and by bringing together the perspectives of church leaders, pastors, adult congregants, and young people. In doing so, it seeks to move beyond general descriptions of African Christianity in Britain and provide a grounded account of how faith, culture, migration, belonging, pastoral relationships, and community engagement intersect within a particular Welsh setting.

3. Research Context: African Gospel Churches In Swansea

3.1 Swansea as the Research Setting

Swansea provides an important local setting for examining the experiences of African Gospel Churches within Wales. The city had approximately 238,500 usual residents at the time of the 2021 Census. The census recorded increasing ethnic diversity within the city, with 1.2 per cent of residents identifying within the broad category of Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African. The same census recorded Christianity as the religious affiliation of 41.3

¹⁴ Fesenmyer, "Bringing the Kingdom to the City," 34-54; Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain*.

per cent of Swansea residents, although religious affiliation should not be understood as a direct measure of religious practice or participation.¹⁵

The demographic context is relevant to this study because African Gospel Churches operate within a wider Welsh society that is religiously and culturally diverse. Their members therefore experience Christianity not only through their relationships within the congregation but also through their interaction with the wider social environment. For African migrants and their families, church communities may provide spaces in which religious beliefs, cultural identities, social relationships, and experiences of migration are expressed together.¹⁶

3.2 African Gospel Churches in Swansea

The present study focuses on three African Gospel Churches in Swansea: the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Swansea; Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Swansea; and Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Swansea.

The three churches provide the cases through which this study examines African Gospel Christianity in the Swansea context. They are not treated as identical examples of African Christianity. Rather, the study considers their experiences and practices individually while also examining themes that occur across the three cases.

Public information from RCCG Place of Victory identifies the Swansea congregation as a Pentecostal church and records that it began in July 2008 with approximately eight people. The church initially met in hotel premises before moving to its current location on Westbury Street in Swansea. Its published mission also refers to discipleship, worship, prayer, charity, and community engagement.¹⁷ These details provide useful background to the development and public identity of one of the churches included in the study.

Living Faith Church, commonly known as Winners' Chapel, also has a Swansea congregation. The church's published information identifies it as an arm of Living Faith Church Worldwide and states that the Swansea congregation was officially inaugurated in October 2022. Its public description emphasises the preaching of the Word of Faith and identifies the church as operating within a wider international Christian network.¹⁸

The third case, Deeper Christian Life Ministry, is examined in this study through the researcher's fieldwork and the accounts of participants. The wider ministry has an established presence in the United Kingdom and Ireland and operates regional structures that include Wales.¹⁹ However, this study does not rely on the wider ministry's public profile as a substitute for evidence concerning the particular Swansea congregation. Its contribution to the study is examined through the written responses to the online questionnaire, observations, and documentary materials collected as part of the research.

15 Office for National Statistics, "How Life Has Changed in Swansea: Census 2021," January 19, 2023, accessed September 29, 2026, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/W06000011>.

16 Swansea Council, *Appendices to Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Report* (Swansea: Swansea Council).

17 RCCG Place of Victory, "About Our Church," accessed September 29, 2026, <https://placeofvictory.org.uk/about-our-church/>.

18 Winners Chapel International Swansea, "About Us," accessed September 29, 2026, <https://winnerschapelswansea.org.uk/about/>.

19 Deeper Christian Life Ministry UK & Ireland, "Deeper Christian Life Ministry UK & Ireland," accessed September 29, 2026, <https://www.dclmukire.org/>; Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Merseyside & Wales Region, accessed September 29, 2026, <https://liverpool.dclm-uk.org/>.

3.3 The Local Importance of the Three Cases

The selection of these three churches provides an opportunity to examine African Gospel Christianity through different congregational settings within the same city. The study does not assume that all African Gospel Churches in Swansea share the same theology, organisational structure, worship practices, cultural expressions, or approaches to community engagement.

Instead, the three cases allow the research to identify areas of similarity and difference. Particular attention is given to the ways in which members and leaders understand Christian faith, cultural identity, migration, pastoral relationships, belonging, and engagement with the wider community.

This local approach is important because broad studies of African Christianity in Britain can identify general patterns without necessarily showing how those patterns are experienced within a particular city. By focusing on Swansea, this study brings the wider discussion of African Christianity and diaspora churches into a specific Welsh setting.

3.4 Swansea, Diaspora, and Community Life

The Swansea context also makes it possible to examine the meaning of diaspora Christianity at the level of everyday community life. For migrants, the church may provide a setting in which relationships are formed, cultural practices are maintained, religious beliefs are expressed, and experiences of life in Britain are discussed and interpreted.

At the same time, African Gospel Churches do not exist separately from the wider city. Their members live, work, study, raise families, and participate in community life beyond the church. The relationship between the congregation and the surrounding community is therefore an important part of understanding the churches' wider contribution.

The present study consequently approaches the three churches as both religious communities and local social communities. It asks how Christian faith, African cultural identity, migration experiences, pastoral relationships, and community engagement interact within the Swansea setting.

3.5 Summary

Swansea provides a distinctive local setting in which to examine African Gospel Christianity within Wales. The city's changing demographic and religious landscape provides the wider context, while the three selected churches provide the specific cases through which the research explores the experiences and contributions of African Gospel communities.

The purpose of the contextual discussion is not to suggest that the three churches represent every African Christian congregation in Swansea or Wales. Rather, they provide three locally situated cases through which the study can examine how African Gospel Christianity is experienced, maintained, adapted, and expressed within a particular Welsh urban environment.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences, cultural practices, and socioreligious contributions of African Gospel Churches in Swansea. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows the study to examine how individuals understand and describe their religious, cultural, social, and migration experiences. It also provides an

opportunity to explore aspects of church life and community relationships that cannot be adequately represented through numerical data alone.²⁰

A case study strategy was employed to provide an in-depth examination of three African Gospel Churches in Swansea: the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Swansea; Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Swansea; and Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Swansea. Case study research is particularly appropriate when a phenomenon is closely connected to the context in which it occurs.²¹ In this study, the religious life of the churches is closely connected to the experiences of African migrants and their families, including questions of cultural identity, belonging, pastoral support, and relationships with the wider community.

The case study approach therefore provided a suitable framework for examining how African Gospel Churches operate within the social and cultural setting of Swansea. The use of questionnaire responses, observation, and documentary materials also enabled the researcher to consider the subject from different sources of evidence and to develop a fuller understanding of the churches and their contributions.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select churches and participants who could provide relevant insights into the sociocultural, theological, and community functions of African Gospel Churches. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative research where participants are selected because of their knowledge, experience, or involvement in the subject being studied.²²

Three African Gospel Churches were selected for the study:

Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Swansea;

Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Swansea; and

Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Swansea.

A total of 15 participants took part in the study. The participants comprised three pastors, four church leaders, six adult congregants, and two youth members. The inclusion of participants from different positions within the churches provided a range of perspectives on worship practices, cultural identity, migration experiences, pastoral support, and community engagement.

Participants were recruited through church announcements, personal invitations, and snowball sampling. These approaches were useful for reaching participants within established church communities where trust and existing relationships can influence willingness to participate.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

4.3.1 Semi-Structured Online Questionnaire

Data were collected in February 2026 through a semi-structured online questionnaire containing open-ended questions. The questionnaire explored participants' experiences and perspectives concerning worship practices, Christian and cultural identity, migration experiences, social support, pastoral care, and relationships with the wider community.

20 John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018).

21 Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018).

22 Lawrence A. Palinkas et al., "Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 42, no. 5 (2015): 533-544, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>.

Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study and how their responses would be used. The questionnaire included a consent section in which participants were asked to indicate whether they agreed to participate or declined participation. Participation was voluntary, and only participants who indicated their agreement were included in the study.

The open-ended format allowed participants to provide their own views and explanations in the spaces provided under the relevant questions. These written responses provided the primary participant accounts used in the findings. Individual participants were anonymised in the reporting of the research.

4.3.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted during worship services, prayer meetings, Bible studies, and community events. Field notes were used to record relevant observations concerning worship styles, cultural expressions, interpersonal relationships, leadership practices, and activities relating to pastoral and community support.

Observation provided an additional perspective on the communal and practical dimensions of African Christian worship and church life. It also enabled the researcher to consider how practices described by participants were expressed within the everyday life of the churches.

Permission for observation was obtained from church leadership. The observation focused on church activities and interactions relevant to the research questions, while individual participants were not unnecessarily identified.

4.3.3 Document Analysis

The study also involved analysis of church websites, newsletters, mission statements, and social media materials. These documents provided additional information about how the churches presented their identity, communicated their mission, described their activities, and engaged with African and Welsh communities.

Documentary materials were considered alongside questionnaire responses and observation data. This provided an additional source through which the public identity and activities of the churches could be examined.

4.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach developed by Braun and Clarke.²³ The process involved familiarisation with the questionnaire responses, observation notes, and documentary materials, generating initial codes, developing potential themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

Coding was conducted manually to maintain close engagement with the participants' written responses, observation notes, and documentary evidence. Themes were developed through repeated examination and comparison of the data rather than being treated as fixed categories from the beginning.

The analysis brought together evidence from the questionnaire responses, observations, and documentary materials. Particular attention was given to recurring patterns relating to cultural identity, theological and worship practices, diaspora experiences, pastoral support, belonging, cultural continuity and adaptation, and relationships with the wider Swansea community.

23 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted independently and did not receive formal institutional ethics approval. In view of this, particular attention was given to informed participation, voluntary involvement, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for participants throughout the research process.

Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study and how their responses would be used. Consent was obtained through the online questionnaire, where participants were asked to select either the option indicating that they agreed to participate or the option indicating that they declined to participate. Participation was voluntary, and only those who agreed to participate were included in the study. Individual participants were anonymised in the reporting of the research to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality.

The churches included in the study are identified by name because permission was obtained from church leadership to identify them in connection with the research. Individual participants, however, remain anonymised.

Permission was also obtained from church leadership to conduct observations during relevant church activities. The observations focused on worship, community interactions, leadership practices, pastoral activities, and other matters relevant to the research questions. Care was taken not to unnecessarily identify individual participants in the observation notes or reporting.

The researcher also recognised the importance of distinguishing personal theological convictions from the reporting and interpretation of participants' experiences. Participants' accounts were therefore treated as their own perspectives and were not assumed to represent all African Gospel Churches or all African Christians in Swansea.

4.6 Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, the findings are based on three African Gospel Churches in Swansea and should not be taken as representative of all African Gospel Churches in Wales or the wider United Kingdom. The purpose of the study is to provide a detailed account of the experiences and contributions found within the selected churches rather than to produce statistically generalisable findings.

Second, the study relies on participants' written responses to an online questionnaire and therefore reflects the experiences and perspectives that participants chose to share. The open-ended format provided participants with an opportunity to explain their views in their own words, but the depth and detail of individual responses varied between participants.

Third, the researcher's interpretation of questionnaire responses, observations, and documentary materials may influence the analysis of the data. To strengthen the study, evidence from the different sources was considered together, allowing recurring themes and differences to be examined across the questionnaire responses, observations, and documentary materials.

These limitations establish the boundaries within which the findings should be understood. The contribution of the study lies in providing a locally grounded account of African Gospel Churches in Swansea and examining how Christian faith, African cultural identity, migration, pastoral relationships, and community life intersect within this particular Welsh context.

5. Findings And Discussion

The findings are organised around four major themes that emerged from the online questionnaire responses, participant observation, and documentary materials: cultural identity and belonging; social support and community welfare; integration and community engagement; and challenges and internal tensions. The findings demonstrate that the three African Gospel

Churches examined in Swansea function not only as places of Christian worship but also as communities in which cultural identity, social relationships, pastoral support, migration experiences, and engagement with the wider society are negotiated.

The quotations presented in this section are drawn from the written responses provided by participants in the online questionnaire. The open-ended questions allowed participants to express their views and experiences in their own words, with space provided for additional comments and explanations.

5.1 Cultural Identity and Belonging

One of the strongest themes emerging from the research was the importance of the churches as spaces of cultural identity and belonging. Participants described the churches as environments in which they felt recognised, understood, and emotionally connected to a sense of home. For some participants, this experience was particularly significant in the context of migration, where everyday life outside the church could involve unfamiliar social and cultural expectations.

Participant 4 expressed this experience in particularly direct terms:

“This church is the only place where I feel at home. Outside, everything is different, but here I can breathe again.”

This account illustrates how the church could provide more than a place for religious worship. For this participant, it represented a familiar social and cultural environment in which they could experience a sense of comfort and belonging. Similar experiences were reflected in the accounts of other participants, who described the importance of shared cultural experiences and relationships within the churches.

Participants also identified worship practices as an important expression of cultural identity. The use of African languages, rhythmic praise, call-and-response patterns, and other familiar forms of worship were described as meaningful aspects of church life. For some members, these practices provided continuity with their previous experiences of Christian worship in Africa.

Participant 7 explained:

“When we sing in Yoruba, it reminds me of who I am and where I come from.”

The findings from the Swansea churches therefore suggest that cultural identity was expressed not only through personal relationships but also through language, music, worship practices, and shared religious experiences. These practices provided participants with ways of maintaining connections with their cultural heritage while living in Wales. This is consistent with research showing that culture, ethnicity, and national identity can shape the theological practices and expressions of African diaspora churches in the United Kingdom.²⁴

The findings also indicate that cultural continuity did not necessarily mean simply reproducing practices from Africa without change. Participants were living within a different social and cultural environment, and their experiences suggested an ongoing process of adapting familiar practices to life in Wales. Sande and Samushonga similarly demonstrate that African Pentecostal churches may adapt their cultural practices when operating within a different social environment, suggesting that cultural continuity and adaptation can occur together rather than being mutually exclusive.²⁵

24 Hartness M. Samushonga and Nomatter Sande, “Doing Diaspora Practical Theology: Insights into How Culture, Ethnicity and National Identity Shape Theological Practices and Expressions of UK-African Diaspora Churches,” *Practical Theology* 13, nos. 1-2 (2020): 109-122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1738673>.

25 Nomatter Sande and Hartness M. Samushonga, “African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption in a Changing World,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40,

An intergenerational dimension was also evident in the research. Some parents expressed concern about the possibility that younger members could lose aspects of African cultural values as they grow up in Britain. At the same time, younger participants appeared to negotiate identities that combined elements of African heritage with the social realities of life in Wales. This suggests that cultural identity within the churches was not fixed but was being continually negotiated across generations.

The churches therefore functioned as important spaces of cultural continuity and belonging. However, the findings suggest that this continuity was not simply a reproduction of the past. Rather, cultural identity was maintained, expressed, and negotiated within the circumstances of contemporary Welsh life. In this respect, the churches provided participants with a setting in which African cultural heritage and Christian faith could be maintained while also being adapted to the social realities of life in Swansea.

5.2 Social Support and Community Welfare

A second major theme emerging from the research was the role of the churches in providing social, emotional, and practical support. Participants described relationships within the churches as important sources of assistance, particularly for migrants dealing with the challenges of settling into life in Britain. For some participants, the church provided a network of people who could offer practical help, encouragement, and a sense of security during periods of adjustment.

Participant 9 described this experience:

“When I arrived, I had no family here. It was the church that helped me find a house and settle.”

This account illustrates the practical role that church relationships could play in the lives of migrants. The support described by participants extended beyond formal worship and pastoral activities to include assistance with everyday challenges associated with migration and settlement. Participants referred to help with job applications, childcare, immigration-related processes, accommodation, prayer, emotional encouragement, and informal advice. Churches also provided community meals, welfare assistance, and informal mentoring for younger members.

Participant 2 explained:

“If I have a problem, the first people I call are from church. They pray with me and stand with me.”

The findings suggest that pastoral care within the churches was understood by participants in both religious and practical terms. Prayer and spiritual encouragement were closely connected to emotional support, practical assistance, and interpersonal relationships. For participants who were establishing their lives in a new country, these relationships could provide an important source of social support and belonging.

The Swansea findings are consistent with Cazarin's research on African Pentecostal diaspora communities, which shows how migrant-initiated churches can create social and spiritual environments through which migrants develop relationships and experience belonging.²⁶ Stockland's research on African Pentecostalism in Britain similarly highlights the importance of church communities in the everyday lives of African migrants.²⁷

no. 1 (2020): 17–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2020.1714137>.

26 Rafael Cazarin, “The Social Architecture of Belonging in the African Pentecostal Diaspora,” *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 440, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070440>.

27 Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain*

At the same time, the findings from Swansea add a local dimension to this wider literature. The experiences described by participants indicate that the churches served not only as places where religious beliefs and practices were maintained but also as informal support networks within the local migrant community. The combination of prayer, practical assistance, emotional encouragement, and social relationships suggests that these different forms of support were often experienced as interconnected rather than as separate aspects of church life.

The findings therefore indicate that the contribution of the three churches extended beyond their formal religious functions. For participants in this study, the churches could provide networks of care and practical support that helped them navigate migration, settlement, family responsibilities, and everyday life in Swansea.

5.3 Integration and Community Engagement

The third major theme concerned the relationship between the churches and the wider Swansea community. Participants described a range of activities through which the churches interacted with people and organisations beyond their immediate congregations. These included local community activities, relationships with Welsh churches, civic initiatives, food-bank activities, youth mentoring, and interfaith engagement.

Participant 11 described the potential of such activities to create greater understanding between the churches and the wider community:

“Our outreach events help Welsh people understand us better. When they see our culture and our joy, barriers come down.”

This account suggests that community engagement was understood by participants not simply as an opportunity to provide practical assistance but also as a way of developing relationships and encouraging greater understanding between African Christian communities and the wider population. The findings indicate that outreach activities created opportunities for interaction across cultural and religious boundaries.

The research also suggests that the churches' contribution to the wider community was not limited to formal outreach programmes. Relationships with local churches, participation in community activities, and informal interactions provided additional opportunities for African Christians to develop connections outside their immediate congregations. These forms of engagement enabled the churches to participate in the social life of Swansea while also maintaining aspects of their cultural and religious identity.

The Swansea findings can be usefully compared with Fesenmyer's research on Kenyan Pentecostals in London, which examines how Pentecostal churches establish themselves within particular localities and how religious activity can contribute to the creation of social spaces.²⁸ Although the Swansea churches operate in a different geographical and demographic context, the comparison highlights the importance of examining diaspora churches in relation to the places in which they are located. In both contexts, religious communities are not separate from their surrounding environment but develop relationships with the localities in which they worship and live.

The findings from Swansea also indicate that community engagement contributed to the visibility of African Christian communities within the wider local environment. Participants nevertheless identified limitations, including cultural misunderstandings, limited visibility, and the relatively small size of the African community within the wider Swansea population. These factors could affect the extent to which the churches were able to establish sustained relationships with the wider community.

28 Leslie Fesenmyer, “Bringing the Kingdom to the City: Mission as Placemaking Practice amongst Kenyan Pentecostals in London,” *City & Society* 31, no. 1 (2019): 34–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12196>.

The evidence therefore points to a two-way process of engagement. The churches sought to contribute to the wider Swansea community through practical and social activities while also creating opportunities to explain aspects of African Christian culture and identity. Community engagement can therefore be understood as both a form of social contribution and a means through which relationships between African Gospel Churches and the wider Swansea community were developed and negotiated.

5.4 Challenges and Internal Tensions

Although participants generally described the churches as important sources of faith, identity, and support, the research also identified areas of tension and disagreement. These findings are important because they provide a more balanced understanding of the experiences within the three churches and avoid presenting African Gospel Churches only in positive terms.

One issue raised by participants concerned financial pressure associated with giving, tithing, and fundraising. Participant 6 stated:

“Sometimes the pressure to give is too much. We want to support the church, but life here is expensive.”

This account suggests that expectations surrounding financial contribution could become difficult for some members within the economic realities of life in Britain. However, this should be understood as the experience of an individual participant rather than as a claim that all members or all three churches experienced financial pressure in the same way. The finding nevertheless highlights how religious expectations can sometimes interact with the financial pressures associated with everyday life in a new country.

Leadership and decision-making were another area of concern. Some participants felt that decision-making could be highly centred on pastors and senior leaders, potentially limiting the participation of other members. These accounts raise questions about how authority, participation, and accountability were experienced within congregational life. At the same time, the findings do not suggest that all participants shared these concerns or that leadership structures operated identically across the three churches.

Gender was also identified as an area in which some participants perceived limitations. Some women expressed frustration about restricted opportunities for leadership and participation. These accounts indicate that questions concerning gender, leadership, and participation remain relevant to understanding the internal dynamics of African Gospel Churches. The findings should, however, be understood within the specific experiences of the participants who raised these concerns rather than generalised across all members of the churches.

Another issue concerned inclusivity. The strong cultural orientation of the churches could create challenges for people who did not share the same African cultural background. Practices that provided belonging and cultural continuity for African members could, in some circumstances, make it more difficult for non-African worshippers to feel fully included. This illustrates a tension between maintaining a distinctive cultural identity and creating a church environment that is accessible to people from different cultural backgrounds.

This tension is significant because it illustrates one of the challenges facing diaspora churches: maintaining cultural identity while remaining open to wider participation. Research on African Pentecostal churches in Britain similarly demonstrates that cultural practices may require adaptation when churches operate within multicultural environments.²⁹ The findings from Swansea suggest that this process of adaptation may involve continuing negotiation between cultural preservation, congregational identity, and inclusivity.

29 Sande and Samushonga, “African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption,” 17–31.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the churches were not experienced by all participants in the same way. Alongside the strong sense of belonging, support, and cultural continuity identified in the earlier themes, some participants also described concerns about financial expectations, leadership participation, gender, and inclusivity. These tensions form an important part of understanding the complexity of African Gospel Church life in Swansea.

5.5 Summary of Findings

The findings demonstrate that the three African Gospel Churches examined in Swansea perform several interconnected roles. They are places of Christian worship and theological formation, but they also provide spaces for cultural expression, belonging, pastoral support, social relationships, and engagement with the wider community.

Cultural identity emerged as a particularly important dimension of church life. African languages, music, worship practices, and shared cultural experiences provided participants with a sense of continuity and belonging. At the same time, younger members appeared to negotiate identities shaped by both African heritage and the social realities of life in Wales. The findings therefore suggest that cultural identity within the churches was maintained while also being adapted to the circumstances of contemporary Welsh life.

The churches also provided practical and emotional support for members, particularly those experiencing the challenges associated with migration and settlement. Participants described the churches as sources of prayer, encouragement, practical assistance, and social connection. These forms of support demonstrate that the role of the churches extended beyond formal religious activities into aspects of everyday community life.

Community engagement formed another important dimension of the findings. The churches' involvement in local activities and relationships with the wider community created opportunities for interaction between African Christian communities and people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. These activities also provided opportunities for the churches to contribute to local community life while maintaining and explaining aspects of their cultural and religious identity.

However, the findings also revealed tensions relating to financial expectations, leadership participation, gender, and inclusivity. These experiences demonstrate that African Gospel Churches are complex communities in which cultural preservation, religious identity, pastoral care, leadership, and adaptation are continually negotiated. The presence of these tensions does not diminish the positive forms of support and belonging identified by participants; rather, it provides a more balanced understanding of church life.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the contribution of African Gospel Churches in Swansea cannot be understood solely in theological or ecclesiastical terms. Their significance also lies in the social and cultural relationships they create and sustain within the lives of African migrants and their families and in their developing relationship with the wider Swansea community. The Swansea cases therefore demonstrate how diaspora churches can function simultaneously as places of worship, cultural continuity, social support, and community engagement while negotiating the challenges of life within a wider multicultural society.

6. Theological And Diaspora Interpretation

The findings can be understood theologically as an expression of Christianity lived within the conditions of migration, cultural change, and local community life. The three Swansea churches are not simply places where an African Christian tradition is reproduced outside Africa. They are communities in which inherited theological convictions and practices are lived alongside the experiences of migration, cultural identity, belonging, pastoral relationships, and engagement with the wider Welsh society. In this sense, the Swansea cases illustrate the practical and contextual character of diaspora Christianity: faith is expressed through worship and doctrine,

but also through relationships, care, identity, community, and the negotiation of life in a new social environment.

6.1 Christian Faith and Cultural Identity

The findings indicate that Christian faith and cultural identity are closely connected within the three churches studied. Participants described African languages, music, worship styles, and familiar forms of fellowship as important aspects of their experience of church. These practices provided continuity with cultural and religious experiences associated with their countries of origin and helped participants maintain a connection with their African heritage while living in Wales.

The findings suggest that culture and Christianity were not experienced by participants as separate categories. Rather, cultural expressions formed part of the way Christian faith was experienced, communicated, and shared within the churches. Samushonga and Sande similarly demonstrate that culture, ethnicity, and national identity can influence the theological practices and expressions of UK-African diaspora churches.³⁰

The theological significance of this finding lies in the way Christian faith is lived through particular cultural circumstances. Worship takes place through language, music, relationships, traditions, and forms of communal expression. In the Swansea churches, these cultural forms appeared to provide members with continuity and familiarity while they were living within a different social and cultural environment.

At the same time, the findings do not suggest that cultural identity remains unchanged. The experiences of younger members indicate that African Christian identity can be negotiated alongside the realities of growing up in Britain. Nyanni's research on second-generation African Pentecostals in the United Kingdom similarly identifies tensions between the Christian practices inherited from parents and the changing social and cultural environment experienced by their children.³¹

The Swansea findings therefore suggest that cultural identity within African Gospel churches is both preserved and negotiated. The church provides continuity with African heritage while also becoming a space in which members, particularly across generations, negotiate what it means to maintain that heritage within contemporary Welsh society. Cultural identity is therefore not simply carried unchanged from Africa to Wales; it is continually expressed, interpreted, and reshaped through the lived experience of the church community.

6.2 Diaspora Christianity and Belonging

The findings also contribute to the understanding of diaspora Christianity as a form of religious life in which belonging is constructed through relationships, shared practices, and a sense of community. Participants described their churches as places where they felt recognised, supported, and connected to others. This was particularly significant for participants who had experienced migration and the loss or absence of established family and social networks.

The church therefore became more than a location for Sunday worship. It provided relationships through which participants experienced community, received support, and maintained connections with aspects of their cultural and religious background. For some participants,

30 Hartness M. Samushonga and Nomatter Sande, "Doing Diaspora Practical Theology: Insights into How Culture, Ethnicity and National Identity Shape Theological Practices and Expressions of UK-African Diaspora Churches," *Practical Theology* 13, nos. 1-2 (2020): 109-122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1738673>.

31 Caleb Opoku Nyanni, "Changing Lanes: Second-Generation African Pentecostals in the United Kingdom," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 1 (2020): 32-45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2020.1721683>.

these relationships contributed to a sense of familiarity and home within the wider experience of migration.

Cazarin's research describes African Pentecostal churches as creating a social architecture of belonging within diasporic contexts.³² His analysis is useful for interpreting the Swansea findings because it highlights the ways in which fellowship, relationships, and shared religious practices can help migrants develop social connections and experience belonging.

The Swansea evidence supports this broader understanding while also highlighting the importance of the local setting. Participants' sense of belonging was connected to their relationships within the churches, but it was also influenced by their experience of living in Swansea. Belonging was therefore both congregational and social: members found a sense of home within the church while continuing to negotiate their place within the wider city.

This has a wider theological significance. Diaspora Christianity is not simply concerned with maintaining religious practices after migration; it also provides a context in which questions of identity, community, home, and belonging are explored through everyday Christian life. The Swansea churches illustrate how religious communities can provide continuity for migrants while also becoming spaces in which new forms of belonging develop within the local environment.

The findings therefore suggest that belonging within African Gospel churches should not be understood solely in terms of shared nationality or ethnicity. It is also produced through worship, relationships, mutual support, and participation in the life of the congregation. In the Swansea context, these practices enabled participants to maintain connections with their African heritage while developing a sense of belonging within their new social environment.

6.3 Cultural Continuity and Adaptation

One of the most significant issues emerging from the study is the relationship between cultural continuity and adaptation. The three churches provide environments in which African Christian traditions can be maintained, while their members live within a Welsh social and cultural context that differs from that of their countries of origin. The findings therefore suggest that maintaining cultural identity and adapting to a new environment are not necessarily opposing processes.

Sande and Samushonga's study of African Pentecostal ecclesiastical practices in the United Kingdom provides an important comparison. Their research shows how African Pentecostal churches can adapt aspects of their cultural practices and expressions in response to a different social environment and in support of cross-cultural ministry and mission.³³ Their work suggests that adaptation does not necessarily require the abandonment of African Christian identity.

The Swansea findings point in a similar direction. The use of African languages, music, worship styles, and other cultural forms remained significant for participants and provided continuity with their previous experiences. At the same time, community engagement and interaction with people outside the churches created opportunities for the churches to respond to a wider social environment.

32 Rafael Cazarin, "The Social Architecture of Belonging in the African Pentecostal Diaspora," *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 440, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070440>.

33 Nomatter Sande and Hartness M. Samushonga, "African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption in a Changing World," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 1 (2020): 17-31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2020.1714137>.

This creates an ongoing tension. Cultural preservation can strengthen identity and belonging, particularly for migrants, but a strong cultural orientation may sometimes make participation more difficult for people who do not share the same background. Conversely, adaptation can create opportunities for wider engagement while raising concerns about the possible weakening of distinctive cultural identity.

The churches therefore operate within a continuing process of negotiation. Their experience suggests that the question is not simply whether African Christian culture should be preserved or adapted, but how Christian identity can remain meaningful while responding to the social realities of a changing environment. In this sense, adaptation can be understood not necessarily as a loss of cultural identity but as part of the way diaspora churches negotiate their identity and mission.

The Swansea cases therefore illustrate the dynamic character of diaspora Christianity. African Christian traditions remain important sources of identity and belonging, while the realities of living in Wales create circumstances in which those traditions are interpreted and expressed in new ways. Cultural continuity and adaptation can consequently exist alongside one another as part of the ongoing life of the churches.

6.4 Pastoral Ministry in a Diaspora Context

The findings also highlight the importance of pastoral ministry within the everyday lives of African migrants. For many participants, the churches were not only places of worship but also spaces where people could receive emotional, practical, and spiritual support. This suggests that pastoral ministry within a diaspora setting often extends beyond traditional religious activities and responds to some of the practical challenges associated with migration and settlement.

Participants described receiving support with matters such as finding accommodation, employment, family concerns, prayer, and personal difficulties. Such support was particularly significant for those who had arrived in Swansea without established family or social networks. The church could therefore provide a sense of stability and familiarity while members adjusted to life in a different social environment.

Stockland's study of African Pentecostalism in Britain similarly demonstrates the importance of African churches in providing religious and social spaces for migrants. The Swansea findings add a local dimension to this wider discussion by showing how pastoral relationships operate within a smaller Welsh city. The support identified by participants was often informal and relational rather than limited to organised church programmes.

From a theological perspective, these findings demonstrate how pastoral care can become closely connected with the everyday realities of migration. Prayer, encouragement, fellowship, practical assistance, and emotional support were not experienced as completely separate activities. Instead, they formed part of the way participants understood Christian community and care.

At the same time, pastoral ministry within a diaspora context can involve challenges. Churches may need to respond to the different circumstances of first-generation migrants, younger members who have grown up in Britain, and people whose experiences of African culture and Christianity differ. This requires pastoral relationships that recognise cultural heritage while also responding to the changing circumstances of members.

The Swansea churches therefore demonstrate a form of pastoral ministry that operates both within and beyond formal worship. Their contribution lies not only in providing religious teaching and spiritual support but also in creating relationships through which migrants and their families can experience care, encouragement, and belonging. In this context, pastoral ministry becomes an important part of how diaspora churches respond to the practical and social realities of life in a new environment.

6.5 African Gospel Churches and the Swansea Context

The Swansea cases also demonstrate the importance of examining African Gospel Christianity within the particular local settings in which it develops. Existing literature on African Pentecostal and Gospel churches in Britain has often examined broader national contexts or urban settings such as London.³⁴ The experiences of the three churches in Swansea therefore provide an opportunity to consider how African diaspora Christianity is expressed within a different Welsh urban context. The experiences of the three churches in Swansea show why attention to smaller Welsh cities can also contribute to a fuller understanding of African diaspora Christianity.

The churches are connected to wider African Christian traditions and maintain relationships and influences that extend beyond Swansea. At the same time, their members live, work, study, and raise families within the local Welsh environment. Their Christian identity is therefore shaped by both their connections to their African heritage and their everyday experiences in Swansea.

This local setting is important because the churches do not operate separately from the wider community. Participants described relationships with other churches, involvement in local activities, and efforts to engage with people outside their congregations. These activities show that the churches are part of the social life of Swansea while continuing to maintain distinctive aspects of their African Christian identity.

Adogame's work on African migrant churches is useful in understanding this interaction between diaspora identity and the local environment. His research highlights how African Christian communities negotiate their identities within the places where they settle while also maintaining connections that extend beyond the immediate locality.³⁵ The Swansea findings reflect this interaction between local and wider forms of belonging.

The experience of the three churches also suggests that diaspora identity should not be understood as something that migrants simply bring from one country to another. Cultural and religious identities continue to develop through everyday relationships, worship, community activities, and experiences within the new environment. In Swansea, African Christian identity is therefore expressed within a Welsh setting and is influenced by the realities of living in that setting.

This local perspective is particularly important because Swansea provides a different context from the larger British cities that have received greater attention in research on African Pentecostalism. The smaller scale of the African migrant community, together with the social and cultural character of Swansea, creates particular circumstances in which churches establish their presence and develop relationships with the wider community.

The Swansea cases therefore demonstrate that African Gospel Christianity in Britain should not be understood as a single uniform experience. While the churches share important connections with wider African Christian traditions, their experiences are also shaped by the particular places in which they are located. Examining Swansea consequently provides a useful opportunity to understand how African Gospel churches maintain their religious and cultural identity while becoming part of the social and community life of Wales.

34 Katharine Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain: Migration, Inclusion, and the Prosperity Gospel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

35 Afeosemime U. Adogame, "The Visibility and Invisibility of Migrant Faith in the City: Diaspora Religion and the Politics of Emplacement of Afro-Christian Churches," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, no. 5 (2013): 667–684, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.756658>.

6.6 Interpreting the Contribution of the Churches

Taken together, the findings suggest that the contribution of the three African Gospel Churches in Swansea can be understood across several connected areas. Their role is not limited to Christian worship but also includes cultural, pastoral, social, and community dimensions of life.

First, the churches make a religious contribution by providing spaces for Christian worship, prayer, Bible teaching, fellowship, and spiritual development. These activities remain central to the identity and purpose of the churches and provide the foundation for many of the other forms of activity identified in the study.

Second, the churches make a cultural contribution. The use of African languages, music, worship practices, and cultural traditions provides members with opportunities to maintain and express aspects of their cultural heritage. For migrants, these practices can provide continuity with previous experiences while also helping younger generations remain connected to aspects of their family and cultural background.

Third, the churches provide pastoral and social support. The findings show that relationships within the churches can provide encouragement, prayer, practical assistance, and emotional support. These forms of support were particularly important for some participants as they adjusted to life in Britain and developed new social networks.

Fourth, the churches contribute to the experience of diaspora life by providing spaces in which questions of identity, belonging, cultural continuity, and adaptation can be negotiated. The churches allow members to maintain connections with their African heritage while also responding to the social realities of living in Wales.

Finally, the churches contribute to the wider community through their involvement in local activities and relationships beyond the immediate congregation. Although the extent of this engagement differed, participants described activities that created opportunities for interaction with people and organisations outside the churches. These relationships provided ways for the churches to participate in local community life while also sharing aspects of their cultural and religious identity.

These different contributions should not, however, be viewed as completely separate from one another. The findings show that they are closely connected. Worship can strengthen cultural identity; cultural identity can contribute to belonging; belonging can create networks of support; and those networks can encourage wider community engagement. The different dimensions of church life therefore interact with one another.

The findings also show that these contributions exist alongside internal challenges. Issues relating to financial expectations, leadership, gender, and inclusivity demonstrate that the churches are complex communities in which different experiences and perspectives exist. Recognising these tensions is important because it provides a more balanced interpretation of the role of African Gospel Churches rather than presenting them only as sources of support and cultural belonging.

The theological significance of the Swansea cases therefore lies in the relationship between faith, culture, migration, and locality. African Gospel Christianity in Swansea cannot be understood simply as a continuation of African Christianity in a different geographical location. Neither can it be understood simply as an adaptation to Welsh Christianity. Rather, the findings suggest that it is a lived form of Christianity in which inherited traditions, migrant experiences, local relationships, and the realities of life in Wales interact with one another.

The three churches examined in this study therefore illustrate how diaspora Christian communities can maintain important elements of their religious and cultural heritage while developing new forms of belonging and engagement within their local environment. Their

contribution to Swansea is consequently best understood through the combined religious, cultural, pastoral, social, and community relationships that form part of their everyday life.

7. Conclusion And Implications

7.1 Conclusion

This study examined the socio-cultural, theological, and diaspora contributions of three African Gospel churches in Swansea: the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Swansea; Living Faith Church (Winners' Chapel), Swansea; and Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Swansea. Drawing on written responses from fifteen participants through a semi-structured online questionnaire, participant observation, and documentary materials, the study explored how these churches function within the religious, cultural, and social lives of their members.

The findings indicate that the churches serve purposes that extend beyond regular worship. They provide spaces in which African cultural identities are expressed and maintained through language, music, worship practices, relationships, and shared traditions. At the same time, they provide a sense of belonging for migrants who may experience social and cultural adjustment after moving to Wales. In this respect, the findings are consistent with wider scholarship that understands African diaspora churches as important spaces for negotiating religious identity, cultural continuity, and belonging.³⁶

The study also found that pastoral and community support forms an important part of church life. Participants described the churches as sources of prayer, encouragement, practical assistance, friendship, and support during periods of migration and adjustment. These experiences suggest that pastoral ministry within diaspora churches can involve both spiritual and practical responses to the circumstances of migrant life. This reflects wider research showing that African Pentecostal communities in Britain can provide social relationships and forms of support alongside their religious activities.³⁷

Community engagement was another important aspect of the churches' contribution. Participants described involvement in activities that brought church members into contact with the wider Swansea community. These activities created opportunities for African Christians to express aspects of their faith and culture while developing relationships beyond the immediate church community. The findings therefore suggest that diaspora churches can participate in the social life of the city while maintaining important aspects of their religious and cultural identity.³⁸

At the same time, the study identified tensions within church life. Financial expectations, leadership structures, gender and participation, and the balance between cultural preservation and wider inclusivity were identified as areas in which some members experienced difficulty. These findings are important because they demonstrate that African Gospel churches should not

36 Hartness M. Samushonga and Nomatter Sande, "Doing Diaspora Practical Theology: Insights into How Culture, Ethnicity and National Identity Shape Theological Practices and Expressions of UK-African Diaspora Churches," *Practical Theology* 13, nos. 1-2 (2020): 109-122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1738673>; Rafael Cazarin, "The Social Architecture of Belonging in the African Pentecostal Diaspora," *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 440, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070440>.

37 Katharine Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain: Migration, Inclusion, and the Prosperity Gospel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

38 Leslie Fesenmyer, "Bringing the Kingdom to the City: Mission as Placemaking Practice amongst Kenyan Pentecostals in London," *City & Society* 31, no. 1 (2019): 34-54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12196>.

be understood only through their positive contributions. Like other religious communities, they contain different experiences, expectations, and perspectives among their members.

The Swansea cases also demonstrate the importance of understanding African Christianity in Britain as a dynamic diaspora phenomenon. The churches retain significant connections with African Christian traditions while operating within a Welsh social environment. Their practices therefore involve both continuity and adaptation rather than a simple transfer of an African religious model into Britain. This interpretation is consistent with scholarship on African diaspora Christianity, which highlights the interaction between culture, migration, religious identity, belonging, and the local environment.³⁹

7.2 Implications for African Gospel Churches

The findings have several implications for African Gospel churches operating within diaspora settings.

First, cultural expression can play an important role in creating belonging among African migrants. Language, music, worship practices, and communal relationships can provide continuity for people living away from their countries of origin. However, the findings also indicate the importance of creating space for younger members and people from different cultural backgrounds whose experiences may differ from those of first-generation migrants. Research on second-generation African Pentecostals similarly demonstrates that younger Christians may negotiate African heritage alongside the social and cultural realities of life in Britain.⁴⁰

Second, pastoral ministry in diaspora settings may need to recognise the practical realities of migration. Participants' accounts suggest that members may require forms of support that extend beyond conventional pastoral activities, including assistance with settlement, employment, relationships, and everyday challenges. Such support does not replace the theological and spiritual mission of the church. Rather, it illustrates how pastoral ministry can respond to the circumstances in which members actually live.

Third, community engagement can provide opportunities for churches to develop relationships with the wider society. Participation in local initiatives and community activities can enable churches to contribute to the social life of Swansea while allowing members to maintain their religious and cultural identity. Research on African Pentecostal communities in Britain similarly points to the importance of relationships between migrant churches and the urban environments in which they are established.⁴¹

Finally, the tensions identified in this study suggest areas for continuing reflection within church leadership. Questions concerning financial expectations, leadership participation, gender, intergenerational relationships, and cultural inclusivity are relevant to the development of

39 Nomatter Sande and Hartness M. Samushonga, "African Pentecostal Ecclesiastical Practices and Cultural Adaption in a Changing World," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 1 (2020): 17–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2020.1714137>; Afeosemime U. Adogame, "The Visibility and Invisibility of Migrant Faith in the City: Diaspora Religion and the Politics of Emplacement of Afro-Christian Churches," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, no. 5 (2013): 667–684, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.756658>.

40 Caleb Opoku Nyanni, "Changing Lanes: Second-Generation African Pentecostals in the United Kingdom," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 1 (2020): 32–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2020.1721683>.

41 Katharine Stockland, *African Pentecostalism in Britain: Migration, Inclusion, and the Prosperity Gospel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022); Leslie Fesenmyer, "Bringing the Kingdom to the City: Mission as Placemaking Practice amongst Kenyan Pentecostals in London," *City & Society* 31, no. 1 (2019): 34–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12196>.

diaspora congregations. Addressing these issues does not necessarily require abandoning African cultural or theological identity. Rather, the findings suggest the importance of considering how that identity can be expressed within changing social, cultural, and generational circumstances.

7.3 Implications for Further Research

This study is limited to three African Gospel churches in Swansea and fifteen participants and therefore does not claim to represent all African Gospel churches in Wales or the United Kingdom. Its contribution is instead its locally grounded examination of a relatively specific Welsh setting.

Further research could extend the study to a larger number of African churches across Swansea and other Welsh cities. Comparative research could examine similarities and differences between churches with different denominational, national, linguistic, and theological backgrounds.

Further attention could also be given to the experiences of younger members, particularly those who have grown up or spent significant parts of their lives in Britain. Research involving women in church leadership, newer migrants, and relationships between African churches and other Christian or faith communities in Wales could provide additional insight into the changing nature of African diaspora Christianity.

Longitudinal research could also examine how African Gospel churches change over time as congregations become more established in Wales and as younger generations take on greater roles within church life. Such research could help to show whether current patterns of cultural continuity, adaptation, pastoral support, and community engagement remain stable or develop in response to changing social and generational circumstances.

7.4 Final Conclusion

African Gospel churches in Swansea provide an important setting for examining the relationship between Christian faith, African cultural identity, migration, belonging, and community life. The three churches examined in this study are not only places of religious worship but also communities in which people express cultural identity, develop relationships, receive pastoral and practical support, and negotiate their experiences of living within Welsh society.

The study demonstrates that diaspora Christianity involves both continuity and adaptation. African Christian traditions remain significant, but they are expressed within a different geographical, social, cultural, and generational environment. The Swansea context therefore provides a useful local perspective on wider discussions concerning African Christianity, Pentecostalism, and Christian diaspora communities in Britain.

The main contribution of this study lies in bringing the experiences of three African Gospel churches in Swansea into wider discussions of African diaspora Christianity. While the findings cannot be generalised to all African Gospel churches, they provide a locally grounded account of how faith, culture, migration, pastoral care, and community engagement can become closely connected within the everyday life of African Christian communities in Wales.

More broadly, the study shows that the significance of diaspora churches cannot be understood only through their religious activities. Their role also develops through the relationships they create, the cultural identities they help maintain, the support they provide to members, and the ways in which they engage with the communities in which they are located. The Swansea cases therefore offer a perspective on how African Gospel Christianity continues to develop as African Christian traditions interact with the social and cultural realities of life in Wales.

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