



**10th Conference of the African Association
for the Study of Religions**

**Regional Conference of the
International Association for the History of Religions**

**Spirituality, Gender, and Agency
in African Religions**

Gaborone, Botswana, 28 to 30 July 2026

The African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) invites proposals for individual papers, panels, roundtables, and poster presentations for its biennial conference to be held at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana, from 28 to 30 July 2026.

Keynote Speaker: Professor Ezra Chitando



Ezra Chitando is Professor of History and Phenomenology of Religion at the University of Zimbabwe and for many years has served as theological consultant for the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa of the World Council of Churches. A highly prolific writer and editor, he has published extensively on

issues relating to religion and society, including questions of gender and sexuality in African indigenous religions and Christianities. He recently co-edited *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary African Women* (2025), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Men and Masculinities* (2024), *Religion, Gender, and Sustainable Development in East and Southern Africa* (2024), *COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence in Zimbabwe* (2024), *Gendered Spaces, Religion and Migration in Zimbabwe* (2024), *Women, Religion and Leadership in Zimbabwe* (2023), and he co-authored *Reimagining Christianity and Sexual Diversity in Africa* (2021). Chitando's leadership in the field was recently recognised by the publication of a festschrift, *Religion, Gender and Masculinities in Africa: Essays in Honour of Ezra Chitando* (Bamberg University Press, 2025).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Spirituality as a concept allows for an understanding of religion beyond a narrow focus on religious beliefs and institutions. It foregrounds the lived, experiential, embodied, and sensual ways humans relate to the sacred in a quest for meaning, purpose, reverence, and interconnectedness with each other, the earth, and other species, spirits, and god/s. Spirituality as an everyday practice and orientation blurs and transcends the boundaries between religious traditions and neat categories, as it is diffuse, complex, dynamic, and fluid.

In this conference, we propose a focus on spirituality within, across, and beyond Africa's diverse religions—most notably indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam, as well as other minority traditions. We are particularly interested in conversations about how spirituality is connected to social, political, and economic agency, especially for marginalized groups, including women and ethnic minorities. How does spirituality empower people in social life? How does spirituality intersect with the performance of political power and economic development?

Furthermore, this conference seeks to provide a platform for interrogating how gender and other social dynamics shape spiritual practices and how spirituality influences gender and other social identities in Africa, historically and today.

Sub-Themes

Scholars, researchers, and practitioners are invited to submit abstracts for individual papers, panels and roundtables on the following suggested sub-themes and any topics related to the conference theme, such as:

1. Theoretical and methodological issues in spirituality study
2. Spirituality, gender and agency in Africa
3. African traditional religious conceptualization of spirituality
4. African Christianities and spirituality
5. African Islams and spirituality
6. The role of women in African traditional religions
7. Gender dynamics in contemporary African spiritual practices
8. Gender roles and relations within modern African spiritual movements
9. Globalization and modernization on spirituality and gender dynamics in African religions
10. Comparative studies of gender roles across different African religions
11. The impact of spirituality on gender identity and expression in African societies
12. Spirituality, politics, agency in African religions
13. The role of religious rituals and practices in shaping gender expressions
14. Women, religious abuse and violence
15. Gender, agency and healing through African spiritual practices
16. Gender, spiritual power and agency in African religions
17. Intersectionality of gender, spirituality, and socio-political contexts in Africa
18. Spirituality and empowerment
19. The relationship of spirituality, gender and economic inequalities
20. Religion, spirituality, and development

Panel/Round Table Proposals

We also solicit papers for the following panels:

1. A panel in honour of Prof. Gerrie ter Haar
2. A panel in honour of Prof. Elias Bongmba
3. A panel on African Women Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development
4. AASR Women Caucus Panel
5. *Utambuzi* AASR Journal Panel
6. *Religion & Development* Journal Panel

Submission Guidelines

Please submit the following:

- **For individual papers:**
 - A 250-300 word abstract.
- **For pre-convened panels:**
 - A 250-300 word abstract describing the panel as a whole.
 - A separate abstract for each individual paper within the panel.
- **For roundtable proposals:**
 - A 250-300 word abstract outlining the roundtable discussion.
 - A list of confirmed discussants with brief bios or affiliations.

Important information

- Interested participants should submit proposals (see above guidelines) using the following link: <https://forms.gle/jCbtPbGxtrynsSDR6>.
 - Each proposal should include a title that reflects the content of the abstract as well as each author's contact details (name, position, institutional affiliation, email address, phone/WhatsApp contact).
 - You may submit more than one proposal.
 - There are two deadlines for paper submission:
 - 1) Papers submitted by **31 October 2025** will receive a response by 30 November 2025.
 - 2) Papers submitted **6 February 2026** will receive a response 1 April 2026.
 - Please note that the latest possible submission date is **6 February 2026**.
 - Participants in the conference must be registered by **Monday, June 1, 2026**.
- We look forward to your contributions and a rich and engaging conference.

Contacts for Inquiries and Further Information

1. Prof. Benson Igboin, AASR General Secretary, bensonigboin@gmail.com
2. Dr. Telesia K. Musili AASR Deputy Secretary, telesia.musili@gmail.com
3. Dr. Tshenolo J. Madigele, Chairperson of the Local Organising Committee, madigeletj@ub.ac.bw

GRANTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Thanks to the generosity of some senior members of our Association, we can provide a limited number of conference grants to support the participation of graduate students at the conference.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be based on the African continent
- Be AASR member (or part of the award will be used to cover the membership fee)
- Be a postgraduate student (MA or PhD)
- Have an accepted Abstract for presentation at the conference
- Commit to submitting their revised conference paper to the AASR Journal.

To receive consideration for a travel grant, check the box in the registration form that confirms your eligibility. In the space provided, please provide a rough budget, the amount requested, and a brief narrative explaining your financial needs and the academic benefit of attending the conference.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Upon acceptance of proposals, you can register for the conference by paying the registration fee.

Conference registration includes the following: entrance to the conference, reception dinner, tea breaks and light refreshments, daily lunches, and conference materials.

Fee for Africa-based participants

- Regular rate (non-AASR members): \$200
- Membership rate (for AASR members who have paid their 2025/26 membership fee*): \$150
- Student/retiree rate: \$100

Fee for Global North-based participants

- Regular rate (non-AASR members): \$300
- Membership rate (for AASR members who have paid their 2025/26 membership fee*): \$250
- Student/retiree rate: \$175

After 31st May 2026, the above fees will increase with \$25.

*If you have doubts about the membership fee payment, please contact the AASR Treasurer at treasurer@a-asr.org.

Membership Fees

If you are not yet an AASR member and would like to join the Association, please sign up via our website > “Join Us” which also leads you to payment options.

Membership fees are as follows:

Scholars from the Global South:

- Fully employed: \$50 USD
- Students/Retirees/Underemployed: \$25 USD

Scholars from the Global North:

- Fully employed: \$60 USD
- Students/Retirees/Underemployed: \$30 USD