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| Monday, 25 November, 2002, 13:36 GMT **Lightning kills Zimbabwe worshippers**<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2510637.stm>Members of the Vapostori sect in HarareThe Vapostori are Zimbabwe's largest religious groupTen members of a religious sect have been killed by lightning near the Zimbabwe capital, Harare, while conducting open-air prayers. The state-run Herald newspaper reports that two of those who died were children and another 61 people suffered burns. The injured were treated in hospital in the dormitory town of Chitungwiza, 35 kilometres (22 miles) south of Harare. Members of the "Vapostori" sect do not worship in churches. They say they are Christians but Zimbabwe's mainstream churches are divided about whether or not they should be counted as Christians, as they also incorporate many traditional beliefs and practices. **Electrical storms** They are often seen praying on pieces of waste ground or under trees, wearing their white robes during the week-end. The Herald reports that the congregation was still singing as the storm moved into Chitungwiza.

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| Vapostori childrenThe Vapostori say they are Christian but practise polygamy |

As the rain began to fall, the men knelt down, making them more vulnerable to the lightning, which more often hits people by travelling along the ground, than a direct strike from the air. Zimbabwe is one of the world's most lightning-prone countries, with violent tropical storms common during the rainy season, which lasts from October to April. Many people are killed by lightning every year and The Herald sometimes shows the running total of lightning deaths on its front page. The Vapostori are Zimbabwe's largest religious group, numbering more than two million. However, they are split into many different factions - with different groups praying on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays. Many groups practise polygamy. The men all shave their heads and grow long beards.  | http://news.bbc.co.uk/shared/img/o.gif |

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| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/shared/img/999999.gif |
| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/olmedia/880000/images/_880305_zimdadwe_divided_mgpuf.jpg |
| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/shared/img/cccccc.gif**Key stories**[Undercover report](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2678557.stm)[2002: bleak year](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2568545.stm)[Mugabe's victory](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2744849.stm)[Black land victims](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2414713.stm)[Hunger stalks the land](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1964548.stm)[Cricket crisis](http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/cricket/2654669.stm)[Reporters stand firm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1966949.stm)[Economic fears](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/1870882.stm) |
| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/shared/img/o.gif

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| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/img/in_depth/mega_interactive.gif | **IN DEPTH** |

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| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/img/in_depth/mega_talkingpoint.gif | **TALKING POINT** |

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| http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/img/in_depth/mega_talkingpoint.gif | **FORUM** |

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| [Your questions to the BBC's Mike Donkin](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/forum/2420287.stm) |
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