

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE WITH HOPE
Four Decades Of Grace (1964 – 2004)

“Your light must shine in the sight of men” [Matthew 5:16]

**Your Excellency the Republican President, Mr Levy Patrick
Mwanawasa, SC.**

Your Honour the Vice President, Mr Lupando Mwape.

Honourable Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

Distinguished Presidents of Opposition Parties

The Chief Justice and learned members of the Judiciary

The Speaker of the National Assembly

Honourable Members of Parliament

Their Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

**Right Reverend Bishops, Archbishops, bishops, Reverend
Fathers, Pastors, Women religious, Fellow Church leaders**

And may I simply say to all Zambians of Good will!

Introduction

The three Christian Church mother bodies, namely, the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and address this pastoral statement to you in summary form. It is my rare privilege to read this message in summary form to you on behalf of the Church mother bodies.

Since the joyful occasion of national independence in 1964, we have always known that Independence was not the end but rather the beginning of a long and difficult road towards nation building. The Church has always called for unity, dedication and hard work from each and every citizen as necessary conditions if that nation building is ever to become a reality.

This year marks forty years since we started our nation building. As we celebrate now our fortieth independence anniversary with joy and thanksgiving, it is befitting to use the occasion to reflect on how, as a country, we have performed on our journey towards nation building and what challenges lie before us.

Reasons to celebrate

We have many reasons for celebrating the fortieth anniversary of our independence from colonial rule. One of these reasons is our unity in cultural diversity. In spite of Zambia's social diversity, we have managed to hold together in unity as citizens of Zambia. Today, Zambia is often described as an "Oasis of Peace". This is indeed appropriate because this country has not known extreme civil strife to the levels that we have witnessed in some countries. We should also be happy as a country that we have used this peace responsibly: Many of Zambia's neighbours attained their independence from colonial rule, thanks in part, to the critical role played by Zambia in their emancipation.

Investment in Infrastructure, Health and Education and Other Areas

During the colonial era, very little was done in terms of investment in human and infrastructure development. At the time of independence, in 1964, there was therefore a great challenge for Zambia to make education and health services available and accessible to all Zambians.

This could not be achieved without massive investment in health and educational facilities. In the past forty years of independence, hospitals and rural health centres have been constructed in all the districts.

We can also celebrate Zambia's investment in other relevant infrastructure such as roads, electricity, telecommunications, and information technology. These are vital ingredients in the development of any country.

The Contribution of the Church to Nation Building

As we commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Zambia's independence, we celebrate the fact that as a church we have not been mere spectators in nation building and national development. The churches have made and continue to make significant contributions in the areas of health, education, rural agricultural development programmes, youth empowerment and the fight against HIV/AIDS and its devastating effects on the family and society at large.

Though our well meant contributions have sometimes been misunderstood, we have also played our part in governance issues, always bringing in the moral and ethical dimension in the promotion of greater respect for human rights, the establishment of social justice, and strong concern for the poor.

In spite of the major achievements made by this country, challenges and set backs abound. These challenges are learning points and should serve as lessons in building our future.

The challenges include our dependency on copper and our failure as a country to develop credible economic alternatives. The introduction of the One Party State in 1973, though well intended at the time, became synonymous with political intolerance and totalitarianism. Similarly "The third republic" window of opportunity today stands as a missed opportunity.

The pandemic of HIV/AIDS

The mid-1980s presented Zambia, the sub-region and the rest of the world with the rapid spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We, Churches, were among the first institutions to make public the warning that we were faced with a catastrophic disease. Already in 1988 (as Church mother bodies) we jointly addressed this issue in our joint Pastoral Statement on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, *Choose to Live (1988)*. The disease has increased the burden of our already under-resourced hospitals and decreased the efficiency of our educational system.

Call for a Change of attitudes

We need a change of attitude where Zambians will derive greater joy in serving their country than in pursuing personal gain. However, this type of commitment will only be achieved if all are seen to sacrifice for the country. Remember what James teaches us: "Faith without works is dead!" (James 2:17) We Christians can make a difference in our country if we get fully involved in national affairs by bringing morality to bear on all national processes.

CONCLUSION

May I therefore, on behalf of the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), who have jointly authored this pastoral statement wish you your Excellency, Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa and the people of Zambia a happy fortieth anniversary full of hope in the future of Zambia. Let us share that hope with each other!

Archbishop Medardo J. Mazombwe
Archbishop of Lusaka