

**Joint Pastoral Statement
From The Three Church Mother Bodies
On The
Forthcoming Presidential By Election**

OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, LESSONS

To all Priests, Religious and lay Faithful

**To be ready in Parishes,
On Sunday 19th and 26th October, 2008**

PREAMBLE

To all members of our three Christian Church Bodies, and to all people of goodwill in Zambia! We, the Church leaders representing the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship in Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), wish to commend our members and all the people of Zambia for the dignified manner in which we conducted ourselves during the illness and funeral of late President, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa. We urge the people of Zambia to keep the same spirit of unity of purpose and prayer in the coming weeks as we face the challenges of the forthcoming elections.

SPECIAL MOMENTS IN ZAMBIA'S POLITICAL HISTORY

Zambia has had many significant moments in its political history, moments of grace and goodness, moments of hopeful lessons not only for herself but for other African nations and indeed for the whole world.

One such moment was our Independence in 1964, when a young and dedicated group of Zambians took up the mantle of government leadership with profound and selfless commitment to building a nation. A **second** moment occurred in 1991, when multi-partyism was re-introduced in a peaceful fashion and a transition made with dignity as a man who had ruled the country for 27 years accepted electoral defeat in a striking democratic fashion. A **third** moment came just seven years ago, when integral constitutional rule was defended by word and action to guarantee protection against a presidential third-term bid.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH?

Though the role of the Church is often questioned and misunderstood, it is our duty to guide the nation in matters that affect the lives of our citizens in the light of the gospel values.

In all three of these moments, most especially in the last two, the three church organizations have played our rightful role by offering not only impartial analysis but also ethical guidance. Hence it is not only appropriate but also imperative that our churches again play a key role at this moment in our history. A new opportunity now presents itself for Zambia to show an example of political maturity, an example so very much needed in our often strife-ridden continent of Africa.

Yes, this is indeed an historical moment, as the country is called to move forward with unity, wisdom and courage after the tragedy of the unexpected death of President Mwanawasa. We face presidential by-elections in only a few weeks time, as we search for a leader who will not only build on the good points of the late President Mwanawasa's legacy, the good contributions of the other presidents before him, but also go beyond that legacy to find new ways of *effectively* and *equitably* serving all the people of this country.

Therefore we, the leaders of the three Christian Church Bodies, jointly write this brief Message. In our reflections, we are guided not by partisan concerns but by biblical principles such as Love of neighbour (Leviticus 19:28, Luke 10:27), respect for human dignity since we are all made in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), hence our insistence on good

governance and promotion of the common good. We are aware that Africa, in particular, and the world in general, will be watching us closely in the days ahead.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US AT THIS MOMENT?

From all people of Zambia is required a love of country and its people, a political love that works to maintain the “One Zambia, One Nation” spirit that is above any party affiliation. We must show forth patriotism, a nationalism that is beyond any tribalism or regionalism. We must be willing to put the people as a whole first in our concerns, above narrow considerations that are divisive and destructive of any real development. We must be ready to renounce and denounce any practice of bribery that cheapens the precious worth of a citizen’s vote.

For this reason we appeal to the people of Zambia to reject any candidate who will not abide by the electoral code of conduct by engaging in a campaign that is characterized by lies and half-truths, making false promises and threats, bribery or corruption to secure votes or any threat or violence to influence outcomes. We must be critical of what we are told by the candidates and of what we read and hear in the media. So we encourage public debates in the “market squares”.

Secondly, from ***our governmental authorities and institutions*** is required a manifestation of professional dedication to smooth, efficient and transparent electoral practices, before, during and immediately after Election Day. The presidential by-elections must be guarded carefully so as to be free of any corruption. We are aware of the shortness of time to prepare for these elections and of the heavy demand for sufficient funding to deploy adequate personnel that will guarantee free and fair elections. We call upon Government to be highly supportive of the work that must be done by the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) if elections that really reflect the desires of the majority of the people are to be assured.

We appeal to those in government to exercise maximum restraint in the use of any government resource – vehicles, public institutions, public media etc. – that gives unfair advantage to the ruling party candidates.

Thirdly, from ***politicians and political parties*** is required a combination of vigorous campaigning with respectful abiding by all the proper electoral laws. We simply must move beyond the ordinary business of a *politics of personalities* to a *politics of policies*. Let us hear that a presidential candidate recognises the truth that the much-acclaimed economic growth of recent years has not in fact benefitted the majority of Zambians. What then is the candidate’s policy to move rapidly to effectively deal with the dehumanising condition of impoverishment for the majority of Zambians today?

What is the agricultural policy of the candidate and is it a policy that truly promotes rural development? What are the different options being offered to improve the challenges of declined educational standards, inadequate health care services, and poor infrastructure such as the electricity grid? Where do our presidential aspirants stand on moving beyond mere words about corruption to effective prosecution of the corrupt, the strengthening of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) by delinking it from the Executive and adherence to

the process of the *African Peer Review Mechanism* (APRM)? How do the candidates intend to deal with instances of gender inequalities, youth despondency, the challenges of the differently-abled, and the threats to environmental integrity?

Let's hear a clear answer from each candidate to the question of whether or not they will push for the new Constitution in an inclusive manner, with a new *Bill of Rights* that includes Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

From the Electronic and Print Media is required impartial and informative reporting and a critical analysis of each political party's programme. The booming presence of community radio stations offers a golden opportunity for these institutions to be used to the maximum in empowering our people to understand the issues so as to enable them participate meaningfully in the elections.

Finally, for this coming presidential by-election, we leaders of the three Church Mother Bodies are asking each candidate to commit to and follow the electoral code of conduct to the letter. What we would like to see is a clean issue-based campaign that would allow our people to make informed choices on who they want to be their next president.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF CANDIDATES?

Over the years, the three Church Mother Bodies, individually and collectively, have spoken out at the time of national elections about the qualities and virtues that should be sought in any candidate who solicits votes. We re-emphasize that the candidate must be God fearing, honest, compassionate, hard-working, wise, selfless, and have a profound love for the poor. Integrity and humility, with a desire to serve and not to be served, should mark the candidate's past, present and future.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we urge that the two weekends prior to the presidential by-election be a period of intense prayer for our beloved country Zambia. This Pastoral Message, in English and translated in local languages, is to be read in the churches of the three mother bodies and that it would be widely disseminated. We ask that its message be a topic of discussion and a guide for action.

13th October 2008

Signed by:

Rev. Moses Lucas Mwale - Chairperson – CCZ

Bishop Harrison Sakala - Chairperson – EFZ

Rt. Rev. George Z. Lungu - President - ZEC