

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

The President

TO: Heads of Churches in Zimbabwe

15 July 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I write to you on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its global constituency of 140 member churches in 78 countries representing over 68 million people, to assure you of our prayers and accompaniment as you continue to carry out your ministries in such a difficult situation as you face in Zimbabwe.

The LWF Council met in Arusha, Tanzania, on 25-30 June 2008. Meeting in the African region this time, our thoughts and prayers were inevitably and inexorably drawn to the tribulations of the people of Zimbabwe in the midst of deepening humanitarian and political crisis. On 26 June 2008, the eve of the presidential run-off election, the LWF Council issued a public statement – a copy of which I enclose herewith – in which we called “for an immediate end to political violence and repression in that country, and the restoration of the democracy for which so many Zimbabweans have struggled and died”. We noted, with great sadness, that “the perpetrators of that intimidation and violence have not hesitated to target church leaders and clergy, as well as opposition party leaders and members, media representatives, academics, specific groups within Zimbabwean society, and anyone thought to have voted for the opposition in the March 29 elections.” We declared that “the attacks on Zimbabweans for exercising their right of democratic choice are directly contrary to the purpose of the struggle for Zimbabwe’s liberation from colonial rule.” We called for the “urgent establishment of a process for building peace in Zimbabwe in which all national actors, regional organizations and the international community are engaged.” And we affirmed that “the Lutheran World Federation stands ready to support the people of Zimbabwe in rebuilding their nation, and in restoring their betrayed hopes of a life in dignity and justice.”

At the request of the LWF Council, I am writing this letter to you as church leaders in Zimbabwe to express our hope and trust in God that God cares for and will save the suffering people of Zimbabwe. I particularly wish to affirm the efforts of the churches in this situation, in helping people whose livelihoods and lives have been undermined by the economic crisis, and who have been the victims of violence and intimidation. I applaud your initiatives to promote peace and to advocate for justice in Zimbabwe, especially where such initiatives have been taken ecumenically, as the common position of the churches in Zimbabwe. “The Zimbabwe We Want: Towards a National Vision for Zimbabwe”, issued in September 2006, was a prophetic call for national unity, as well as an expression of ecumenical witness going

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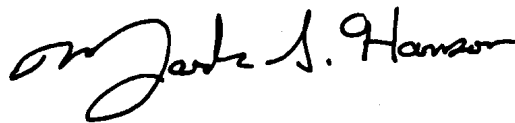
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beyond the boundaries of existing ecumenical structures. Your latest statement, in which you declared your shared view that the will of the people of Zimbabwe was not given authentic expression in the election last month, emphasized the role of the churches in partnering with all efforts to bring peace, stability and reconciliation within the nation. Through such efforts and initiatives, you are true to your calling as churches in confronting suffering and injustice and promoting peace, through common witness in Christ.

I assure you of our solidarity and support in your essential witness and mission. Through the participation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, the entire worldwide Lutheran communion is standing and working together with you in this struggle. Just as we played a role in the rehabilitation and national-building processes in Zimbabwe after independence, the LWF now stands ready to support the people of Zimbabwe in rebuilding their nation when the current crisis has been resolved, and in restoring their hopes of a life in dignity and justice.

May God continue to give you strength and hope as you minister to God's people at this critical moment.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Hanson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark S. Hanson
LWF President