

MARCHING FORWARD AS SOLDIERS OF CHRIST? THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ZIMBABWE, 2000-2013

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Abstract

World-over, the contributions of churches to transforming societies cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, today the churches in Zimbabwe are standing at a crossroad, in search of relevance and identity in the eyes of the majority of the ordinary people who are experiencing poverty and injustice. There have been many events in the political history of the country, beginning from the year of the controversial land reform programme in 2000. Over the past decade every facet of life has been markedly affected by its paradoxical effects. The detrimental effects have been responsible for bringing about the much-acclaimed 'Zimbabwe crisis', and causing grinding poverty for the majority of citizens. Accordingly, the purpose of the study is to examine some Christian responses to this phenomenal crisis. Given the diversity of the Christian churches in Zimbabwe, the earliest responses were watchfully cautious. This lukewarm attitude was largely dictated by the fear of inviting unspecified reprisals from the machinery of the State. Nevertheless, as the myriad of crises continued to mount, the churches reconsidered their divine mandate and decided to march forward as 'Soldiers of Christ' in order to take the bull by its horns. Specifically, this article focuses on the contributions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) as it attempts to bring about a renaissance and the regeneration of sustainable development in Zimbabwe. Judging from the context of its activities to mitigate the socio-economic and political challenges facing the country, the ELCZ is being inspired by a liberationist paradigm of doing theology, whether in the broad fields of education, health, policy advocacy or pastoral ministry

Key Words: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe; Land Reform; Liberation Theology; Sustainable Development; Zimbabwe Crisis

Introduction

As Lucado (2003:1528) narrates it, a certain general whose army was afraid to fight in a battle. The soldiers were scared because the enemy seemed stronger. The general himself, however, was not afraid. He knew his soldiers would win. How could he convince them? He hatched an idea and told his soldiers that he possessed a magical coin that could foretell the outcome of the battle. On one side was an *eagle* and on the other a *bear*. The general would toss the coin and if it landed with the eagle-side up, the soldiers would win. If the coin landed with the bear-side up, they would lose. The soldiers were dead silent as the coin was flipped in the air. They vigilantly circled together as it fell to the ground. The soldiers held their breath and shouted when they saw the *eagle*. It meant they would certainly win. Bolstered by this assurance, the soldiers marched forward with renewed courage to fight the formidable enemy. It was only after they had been victorious that the general showed them the coin of which the sides were, in fact, identical! Though this account appears legendary, the symbolism and its ultimate truth-value continue to be vital.

This article engages the foregoing metaphor of militarism to demonstrate the sort of tough courage expected and required by the church as an ecclesiastical institution to deal with the magnitude and relentlessness of the contemporary Zimbabwe crisis. Against the backdrop of the Zimbabwean crisis, which has brought unprecedented human suffering since 2000, an assurance of victory always acts as a significant mode for renewal. This article posits that the Christian churches need to re-summon their historical mandate. As Verstraelen (1996:105) rightly observes, “When people’s lives are destroyed and people have to live under dehumanising conditions, it becomes a theological issue. The God Christians believe in [is] the God of life ... a God of justice”. Perhaps the question to be raised is: How can the ‘Zimbabwe crisis’ degenerate to the extent that the majority of the ordinary people are starving, whilst about three million professionals went into diaspora? (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2004:223). The paradox, however, is that about 70% of the Zimbabwean population are Christians (Chitando, 2002). The politicians are included in this statistic. Again, it can be asked: What has happened to the people’s Christian values with regard to, say, love, honesty, justice, trust and forgiveness? Where is the voice of the church as the conscience of the nation?

It must be noted that the Christian churches exist as diversified ecclesiastical institutions in Zimbabwe and many of them are organised along denominational lines. In addition, the majority of the churches tend to concentrate their activities in certain regions of the country (Soderstrom, 1984). In this article the focus is on the contributions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) to the reconstruction of the Zimbabwean society. Specifically, the article evaluates ELCZ’s pastoral and humanitarian services that are intended to mitigate the socio-economic and political challenges. Those services are perceived as part and parcel of the process of nation-building in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Methodological Issues

Two related approaches were applied in conducting fieldwork, of which much as done in the Midlands, Matabeleland and Masvingo provinces where ELCZ concentrates its humanitarian work in Zimbabwe. I adopted a *descriptive survey* method in order to explore and present views and perceptions of ELCZ members on the Zimbabwe crisis, because this approach is flexible and allows for a systematic collection of data by penetrating into the realities of the situation affecting the ELCZ’s parishes, congregations and dioceses in Zimbabwe. Moreover, the descriptive survey method was consistent with ethnographic fieldwork as it enabled researchers to go into the natural settings of the churches and

communities towards probing the views and reactions of ELCZ members to the Zimbabwe crisis. From the survey population, a sample of sixty (60) was derived and twenty (20) from each diocese. Such a large sample promoted the collection of a diverse range of views from the questionnaires. I engaged the *phenomenological method* to tap primary information. This entailed the descriptive study of how individuals experience a phenomenon (which is the Zimbabwe crisis), in order to gain access into the individuals' worldviews that constitute their own experiences (Creswell, 2008). The goal was to describe the people's lived experiences and to analyse critical existential issues by making their voices heard through interviews conducted in three of the ELCZ's dioceses in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean Crisis: From Crisis to Re-construction

Zimbabwe, which once prided itself as the 'breadbasket' of sub Saharan Africa is a country in crisis (*The Zimbabwean*, 9 March 2008). The 'Zimbabwe crisis' started to show its manifestations in the mid 1990s in the forms of mass unemployment, prostitution, brain drain, electricity power cuts, inflation, shortage of consumer goods, family breakdown, street kids and sanctions. As Hammar, Raftopoulos and Jensen (2003:4) have shown, following the loss of a national referendum on a Draft Constitution in February 2000, the ZANU (PF) government undertook a land reform programme, code-named, *Third Chimurenga*. This land reform programme caused shockwaves internationally because it was perceived as unsystematic (Eyre, 2001). Its mechanics were violent. White farmers were literally dragged off of their farms, their property burnt and they received no compensation (Bond and Manyanya, 2002). Following the spiral of violence, Zimbabwe was isolated diplomatically and the economy melted down. Moreover, the social delivery sectors such as health and education collapsed (*The Daily News*, 2002). The high level of lawlessness worsened all this as institutions such as the police, army and prison services came to the support of the ZANU (PF) government (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2004:ix). The living standards of the average Zimbabwean declined drastically. The Zimbabwean crisis reached its peak following the much-disputed presidential election of March 2008. Thereafter, the political terrain of the country plunged into the Machiavellian law of the jungle. The two arch rivals, ZANU (PF)'s Robert Mugabe and MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai wrestled for the support of the people across the country in a way that came to mirror the proverbial fight of elephants whereby the grass suffers.

It is against this background that this article examines Christian responses to the Zimbabwean crisis between 2000 and 2013. It must be realised that these responses are complicated to delineate. In general, responses took different forms and patterns. The complication could be accounted for by the fact that there has been no single voice or single course of action to the Zimbabwe crisis. Christians reacted as individuals or as corporate denominations, the latter form usually expressed through the church leadership. Nevertheless, as envisioned, those responses, whether exhibited by individuals or denominations as a whole, are part of doing a theology of liberation. Liberation theology is seen here as a hermeneutical tool of evaluating society (Croatto, 1984). This theological motif is part of a mutation that seeks the internal renewal of churches so that they may brace themselves to tackle the crisis, without fear or favour. As much as we can assert, liberation theology challenges the contemporary Christian churches to work towards building new communities in shattered societies. From the ruins of the 'failed States' in Africa, the best we can tell is that the task(s) of the Christian churches as guided by the new panorama of liberation theology is to "to envision the future (Ka Mana), paying particular attention to law, human rights and economic justice (Villa-Vicencio) ... reconciliation,

confidence-building and re-orientation (Mugambi)” (Chitando, 2009). In our estimation, it must be noted that, despite the fact that liberation theology has its fiery critics, it is an appropriate paradigm, in view of the heart-rendering challenges facing Zimbabwe today. Accordingly, I explored the activities of the ELCZ in the light of the notions of liberation theology. In order to situate ELCZ in its proper Christian landscape of Zimbabwe, we highlight the history of this denomination. This vantage point possesses the temerity of critical evaluation of the findings in their wider perspectives.

Highpoints of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

The Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) planted the ELCZ in Zimbabwe in 1903. The ELCZ was originally administered from Zululand, South Africa. Nevertheless, it became autonomous in 1962 when Bishop Sundgren was elected to run the local church. In 1963 CSM became an affiliate member both of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA). The history of the ELCZ is intricately involved with the growth of other church denominations in Zimbabwe. Through a ‘Comity Agreement’, many church denominations committed to build their missions in places where they could not compete for the native souls (Soderstrom, 1984). Although ELCZ is a national denomination, it has more members in specific missions located in Mberengwa, Gwanda, Beitbridge and Mwenezi districts. The oldest mission station is Mnene located in the Mberengwa district. In each of the mission stations there is a primary school, a secondary school, a hospital and a church. A few missions have an added school of nursing. All these establishments are possible because each mission station was built on a large mission farm, where activities such as cattle husbandry, crop husbandry, poultry and piggery are major economic undertakings.

In terms of ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Bishop heads the ELCZ as a denomination in Zimbabwe. With reference to the day-to-day administration, ELCZ is divided into three dioceses. Firstly, there is the Eastern diocese located in Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital city. Secondly, there is the Western diocese located in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe’s second largest City. Thirdly, there is the Central diocese located in the city of Zvishavane. Each diocese has a serving Dean (a title equivalent to deputy Bishop). It is noteworthy that the dioceses are made up of 62 parishes that constitute an approximate 300 congregations or churches and are served by slightly more than 50 pastors (ELCZ Annual Report, 2009). The church depends largely on the committee laity to carry out its programme of evangelism. The ELCZ has about 190 000 members (ELCZ Annual Report, 2010).

Mission and Vision of the ELCZ

The mission of the ELCZ is to participate in the process of God’s reconciliation with the world through the proclamation of the gospel message and doing humanitarian or philanthropic service to the needy people. To realise this mission, the ELCZ embarks on a pastoral ministry that supports the twin goals of evangelism and community programmes in Zimbabwe. In reference to funding, the ELCZ has internal donors, from individual well-wishers and external donors from the Evangelical Lutheran churches of America and World Hunger Appeal. At the level of implementation, the ELCZ has its own non-governmental organisation, known as the Lutheran Development Services (LDS) and it operates amongst the disadvantaged people mostly in rural communities. Accordingly, the principal goal of the ELCZ is to bring and sustain integral development to the disadvantaged people. In essence, this vision has made the ELCZ relevant to the majority of the people, especially against the backdrop of the current ‘Zimbabwe crisis’.

Findings of the Study

In examining the activities of the ELCZ, I was able to come up with a number of findings that are classified and highlighted below:

ELCZ and Social Issues.

The ELCZ is active in the broad social sectors that deal with health and education. These sectors were negatively impacted upon by the 'Zimbabwe crisis' during the last ten years. The glaring indicators of social decadence are noticeable through the proliferation of the HIV and Aids epidemic, starvation, street kids, internal human displacement, poor education delivery, prostitution and fragmentation of families (*The Herald*, 12 March 2005).

To mitigate these social ills, ELCZ is involved in community projects. In the case of the HIV and Aids pandemic, the ELCZ is involved in several HIV and Aids awareness campaigns as part of austerity advocacy measures. The church is taking care of the HIV infected and affected people and rehabilitates them at its orphanages. Among the most affected are the children, pregnant women, orphans and vulnerable children. Due to such simmering social problems, ELCZ hospitals, especially Mnene, Musume, and Manana, are currently flooded with HIV infected people who have been rendered helpless (Dube, 2013). These efforts place severe strain on medical staff such as nurses and doctors. The church therefore also undertakes massive training programmes in order to cope with the new problem in the health delivery system. Funds which were donated to the ELCZ, were thus used to resuscitate the health system. More nurses were trained and some financial incentives were given to retain medical staff, buy pharmaceuticals, nutritious food and fax machines, rebuild houses for staff and provide ambulance services in these church-related medical institutions (Kassahun, 2011). It must be noted that Zimbabwe experienced a large volume of highly-qualified professionals who went into Diaspora in search of financial advantage in the SADC region and beyond (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2004:223). It was observed that the rehabilitated people in orphanages are transformed from being liabilities to becoming assets in society again.

The ELCZ has been extremely visible in the provision and rehabilitation of education in Zimbabwe. It is interesting to note that by 2004 there was a drop-out rate of students at the 'Ordinary' Level of general education. Even those students who endured dropped many of their school subjects due to the high cost of examination fees charged by ZIMSEC. Worse, their attendance in schools became erratic, a trend which was noticeable from 2008. The ELCZ has dealt proactively with the situation in a number of ways. Firstly, through its ELCA Global Mission and LDS the church took the necessary steps to identify the disadvantaged students and offered several scholarships, school-by-school and term-by-term (Annual Report, 2008). It was found that the ELCZ was able to fund and sustain many disadvantaged students. For instance, by August 2009, some 6 828 orphans and vulnerable children were funded and sustained in schools at both primary and secondary levels. In addition, there were about 555 'Ordinary' Level students who had their examination fees and stationery fees paid by ELCZ in 2008. A further 1 777 students at 'Advanced' Level at Chegato, Manana, Mnene and Musume had their examination fees paid by the church in the same year, 2008 (Annual Report, 2008). In general, it was found that the ELCZ has experienced a 50.4% increase in the number of the vulnerable students who were assisted with school fees and stationery requirements from the June 2001 figure of 1 225 to the current 6 390 (ELCZ Annual Report 2010). These statistics are cited to show the extent to

which the ELCZ has contributed in this 'war' towards reducing the levels of drop-outs in schools in Zimbabwe.

The ELCZ has also been involved in community advocacy in order to instill the values of good leadership and good citizenship (Moyo, 2011). The church has held several community-based workshops and seminars to try to reach the ordinary people in the context of their situation nationwide. The purpose is to build the capacity of the leadership and other stakeholders on issues such as good governance, accountability, justice and human rights. Some of the workshops held have included: Community Dialogue Seminars, Education for Church Leaders, Youth Advocacy Workshops, Counselling Seminars for Church Laity and Community Awareness Concerts (music and drama competitions). These workshops have tried to instil the values of good citizenship and foster increased appreciation of responsible leadership in society (Janasi, 2010). The ELCZ's advocacy has been directed toward toning down political hate language associated with Zimbabwe's mass media. The Church is aware of the power of the media in shaping public opinion, and has, at several fora, called on journalists to adhere to professional ethics and to be fair in their reporting by not following partisan politics (*The Standard*, 6-12 March 2011). The church has advised journalists to write news that promotes national healing and reconciliation. In addition, these workshops and seminars have underscored the virtue of peaceful co-existence and thereby reduced political violence and intolerance in society (*The Standard*, 6-12 March 2011).

Our findings point to the fact that community advocacy is bearing fruits for many Zimbabweans. For instance, it was observed that more communities are now conscious of their rights and responsibilities (Shava, 2011). Rural people are now more assertive and able to express their views on a variety of topical issues affecting their existence. Specifically, there is an increase in the number of women and the youth who are actively involved in developmental dialogue. The ELCZ is enhancing or incorporating the inclusive and rights-based approaches in all its work.

ELCZ and Economic Issues

In the last decade, the ELCZ has been proactive towards the economic resuscitation in Zimbabwe. The church has operated in such areas as Mberengwa, Zvishavane (Midlands Province), Mwenezi (Masvingo Province) and Gwanda (Matabeleland Province) in order to alleviate poverty and malnutrition, mitigate droughts, sustain food security and boost agricultural production (Muzezewa, 2013). Through its non-governmental organisation, LDS, the church works with rural communities to bring and sustain what is usually dubbed as integral development.

In line with the foregoing insight, the ELCZ has been responsive to the challenges posed by prolonged droughts which hit Zimbabwe hard in the 2002-3 and 2007-8 agricultural seasons. The food security situation was so bad that it condemned many people to starvation (Zhou, 2011). There was a shortage of maize seeds, high input prices, a chaotic land reform programme and skyrocketing inflation. These factors led to heart-rendering poverty in Zimbabwe. The ELCZ sourced funds from sister churches in South Africa, Nigeria and the U.S.A in order to deal with the challenge of food security in the country. As from 2002, the ELCZ has provided some US\$1 000 000 to boost the rural communities in agriculture; the ELCZ purchased and distributed about 90 metric tonnes of seeds and fertilisers for each planting season after 2003 (Padilla, 2011).

ELCZ and Political Processes

It is necessary to mention that the ELCZ's initial approach to political processes in Zimbabwe was that of aloofness. This attitude was largely dictated by the fear of the possibility of 'inviting' unspecified reprisals from the machinations of the ZANU (PF) government (Shava, 2011). Nevertheless, as the crisis deepened, the ELCZ, alongside other churches in Zimbabwe, felt ensnared with a heavy culpable conscience for backtracking divine vocation in supplying a prophetic voice to the voiceless in society. The ELCZ gradually reappraised its mission. In particular, there was a paradigmatic shift in ELCZ' pastoral and theological ethos after 2001. The adoption of the new paradigm was necessitated by the need to help mitigate the foundations of human misery in Zimbabwe (*Daily News*, 4 April 2011).

The ELCZ has been involved in the political processes that involve ZANU (PF) and the MDC party mostly on account of the controversial land reform programme since 2000. ZANU (PF) embarked on this touchy issue to purportedly solve the historical land imbalances due to colonial racial policies (*New African*, 2007:8). Atrocities were committed during the process of land acquisitions; for instance, murder, rape, physical torture, burning of houses and corruption took place across the country. There was political lawlessness, as the State security agents, especially the police and the judiciary, did not bring the perpetrators to book. The better beneficiaries of the land reform were the elite, dubbed the 'cell phone farmers', who hoarded fertile lands at the expense of the genuine landless peasants in rural communities (Tivoni, 2010). The mechanics of such partisan land distribution created a political impasse between ZANU (PF) and the MDC party. The MDC argued that ZANU (PF) never had it so good since the immediate effects of the land redistributions led to black-on-black discrimination and nepotism. In general, these sordid events sent shockwaves through the international community and helped to isolate Zimbabwe diplomatically (*New York Times*, 5 May 2001). As early as 2001, Western nations such as the USA, UK, Germany, France, Canada and their allies imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, but this only further deepened the political crisis (Eyre, 2001:17).

As the culture of political intolerance worsened the churches made an alliance and crafted a working document, *The Zimbabwe We Want*, signed on 26 October 2006. Heads of Christian Churches signed it under the umbrella of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. Thus, ELCZ as an affiliate member was a signatory to this ecumenical document as well (*The Herald*, 3 November 2006). Its aim was two-fold. Firstly, the document accused the ZANU (PF) government of violating human rights in Zimbabwe. Far from keeping silent, the churches (ELCZ included) assumed a prophetic voice through denouncing the scandalous manner in which the land reform programme was being carried out across the country. Therefore, it seems the church leaders collectively urged the government to respect basic human rights, stop intimidating the people, stop the murders and stop the corruption that had characterised the country of Zimbabwe after 2000. The concerns of the churches were later presented in a statement to the news media (*The Standard*, 2-8 September 2007):

The people of Zimbabwe are suffering. Their freedom and fundamental human rights are violated daily with impunity, the shelves of the shops and supermarkets are empty, our currency has become worthless, the public health services have collapsed ... there is widespread corruption and the young people are risking their lives in growing numbers to escape the catastrophe that our country has become.

In the light of the above citation, the best we could determine from evaluating the stance of the churches in Zimbabwe is that they were saying, "No, it is not right" (Banana, 1982:111). This is a new paradigm of doing theology, which in our view expresses a

theology of liberation in the context of crisis. Secondly, the document formulated a framework for reconstruction, in order to build a new society on a sound footing, in which values of justice, equity and reconciliation would prevail once more.

The ELCZ was not passive during and after the Presidential Elections in 2008. There was an impasse after the rerun elections in July 2008. The political impasse was accompanied by violence across the country. In provinces such as Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland Central and Harare it was so unprecedented that it created a large stream of 'refugees' due to human displacement within the country (Ngadzire, 2013). Like the rest of other churches, in Zimbabwe, ELCZ advocated for peace, justice and reconciliation to prevail. Operating under the ecumenical bodies: EFZ, ZCBC and ZCC, the churches prayed for political unity that resulted in the establishment of The Global Political Agreement on 15 September 2008. The SADC block of countries is the guarantor of GPA and South Africa is the facilitator (*Daily News*, 4 April 2011). GPA was significant for setting up the GNU that came into effect on 11 February 2009. The critical issue of the Inclusive Government is mentioned to demonstrate that ELCZ participated in the political processes in order to bring about peace, stability, unity, national healing and reconciliation. The theological inspiration has been that such virtues would bring about harmonious co-existence, peace, security and eventually salvage Zimbabwe's economy (Moyo, 2011).

Quest for Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe: Some Missiological Reflections

The Christian churches are standing at a crossroad on account of the deepening crisis that has affected the socio-economic and political spheres of Zimbabwe's life. Many events have taken place in the political history of the country, following the controversial land reform programme that began more than a decade ago. It must be realised that the social, economic and political problems that Zimbabwe are experiencing must be taken as real symptoms of a deeper spiritual and moral crisis. This is why the Zimbabwean society is deeply divided and morally decadent. Even Adam Smith (1723-1790), the celebrated Scottish political economist of the capitalist free market system, saw that any markets without basic human values such as justice and accountability will not work at all. For Smith, justice and accountability are social virtues for the success of economics and politics (*Churches in Manicaland*, 2006:xi). In our reflection, a *kairos* moment has also arrived in the Zimbabwean context. In our reflection, we perceive the Zimbabwean scenario as supplying a *kairos*, that is, God's visitation requiring decisive action (*The Kairos Document*, 1985:4). The Christian churches in Zimbabwe need to continue to summon their historical mandate so as to grapple with the manifest crises and work for the reconciliation and justice which heal human pain and resentment (Ephesians 2:24). As far as we can encourage, the churches should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the State, supporting policies that are deemed just and opposing those that are not. In the process, the churches should always realise that it should "not seek to be the master of the State, or to be the servant of the State, neither should it be the instrument of the State". Rather, the churches should adopt a 'resurrection attitude' by becoming the conscience of the State through expressing a voice on behalf of the voiceless.

The implication is that the churches need to mobilise resources because they have been entrusted with a responsibility of penetrating every aspect of life with the gospel message. This responsibility is a *commission*, a type of categorical imperative, as drafted by Kant (1724-1804), that makes Christians come to understand themselves simply and theologically as 'Soldiers of Christ' who must march forward to establish a just and more

humane society in Zimbabwe. This missiological self-understanding and pastoral undertaking break a 'theology of silence' towards a new promise for "a new heaven and new earth" (Chitando, 2009) to the impoverished lot in society. In fact, this article subscribes to a liberationist paradigm of doing theology that should guide the pastoral programmes of the Christian churches of God now, and not later. It is also prudent to underscore the need for undertaking further analysis of the role of other Christian churches, under the auspices of the ecumenical spirit, so as to configure the overall relationships between Christianity and politics against the backdrop of the crisis in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

This article explored the experiences and contributions of the ELCZ in transforming the Zimbabwean society amidst social, economic and political hardships. It found that the ELCZ perceives politics and economics as serious activities that affect people's lives and cannot be left to secular authorities alone. Accordingly, the ELCZ is involved in several mission outreach programmes, mostly in the rural communities in order to mitigate the impact of hardships that Zimbabwe is experiencing. On the political front, the church preaches tolerance and encourages plurality of political expression as reflected in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. As part of the recommendation, the government needs a new national vision to restore self-confidence and dignity. Accordingly, we wish to indicate that there is great hope on the part of the current government of President Robert Mugabe, in view of the enshrined five-year blueprint document called *Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation* (ZIM-ASSET) that has been designed as a trajectory of accelerated national development and economic growth in the period, 2013-2018. There must be active collaboration between the churches and the government on the terrain of humanitarian service to rebuild and realign the country on the road of sustainable development. It has become abundantly clear that the ELCZ is involved in some ecumenical programmes meant to inspire, encourage and facilitate national dialogue and reconstruction. In this direction, the ELCZ has made some giant strides to manage constructive engagement with the government as soul mates in order to transform people's lives and together heal Zimbabwe as a nation.

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