

PASTORAL LETTER TO THE NATION

A CALL TO CONSTITUTIONAL FIDELITY, PEACE, AND NATIONAL COHESION

27 July 2026

“Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” - Proverbs 31:9

Grace and Peace

To the people of Zimbabwe, young and old, male and female without distinction and discrimination, as created in the image of God, and bound together by a common national destiny: grace, mercy, and peace be with you. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), after prayerful reflection on the state of our nation and in fulfilment of the Church's pastoral and prophetic mandate, addresses the nation following the enactment of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment) Act (No. 3), 2026 (CAA3). We speak to you in a priestly responsibility, neither in hostility nor in partisan interest, but out of love for our beloved country, Zimbabwe, and being concerned about the integrity of our constitutional democracy, the peace of our communities, and the welfare of present and future generations.

A Nation at a Constitutional Crossroads

We observe that the signing of CAA3 into law on 7 July 2026 has not brought the contestation of the same into finality. Instead, CAA3 has deepened national polarisation and generated serious constitutional, political, and moral contestation. A host of Court applications have been filed by citizens and organisations challenging the validity of the Act, while other citizens have expressed an intention to exercise their constitutional right to demonstrate.

Having followed the issues of contestation around CAA3, this moment calls for sober leadership. We believe that constitutional questions of such magnitude should not be treated as contests in which one political side must triumph over another because the National Constitution is a sacred covenant. All issues of contestation concern the social covenant by which all Zimbabweans agree to live together. When the Constitution becomes a source of deep division, every responsible leader must seek a path that restores public trust, protects peace, and honours the sovereignty of the people.

Our Call for a National Referendum Remains

Throughout the Constitution Amendment Bill (No.3) (CAB3) processes, the ZCC consistently maintained that amendments affecting presidential and parliamentary terms, the manner in which the President is chosen, and the safeguards relating to term limits and term extension; should have been subjected to a national referendum in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Constitution, particularly Section 328.

In our analysis, the enactment of CAA3 does not extinguish the grave constitutional concerns raised by the Church, legal experts, and many citizens. Our position, therefore, remains unchanged: the people of Zimbabwe should be given the opportunity to directly express their will through a free, fair, transparent, and credible national referendum. In our submission to Parliament, we made it clear that constitutional amendments of this nature required a dedicated, independent commission mandated to undertake broad, meaningful consultations rooted in the will of the people, free from the conflict of interest that arises when the institutions and people advancing the Bill are its direct beneficiaries.

In pursuit for a common good that will silence all contestations, we respectfully call upon the Government of Zimbabwe to choose a path of listening in order to maintain constitutional fidelity and national cohesion. It is not too late to pursue an inclusive constitutional and lawful process that gives the people the voice. A referendum would not be an act of weakness; it would be an expression of confidence in the people, a safeguard of legitimacy and a means of reducing the division now threatening our common life.

Respect for the Courts and the Rule of Law

We recognise that several court applications challenging the legality of CAB3 processes and enactment of CAA3 are now before the courts. Without prejudging their merits, we call upon all parties to respect these judicial processes and urge the courts to discharge their constitutional mandate independently, impartially, and without fear, favour or interference. Court processes must be respected, and no person or institution should threaten, intimidate or vilify litigants, lawyers, judicial officers or witnesses for lawfully participating in these proceedings. The 'Rule of Law' is tested most severely when constitutional issues before the Courts are politically sensitive. We are unwavering in our belief that Zimbabwe's peace and constitutional order depends upon institutions that serve the whole nation rather than sectional interests.

Peaceful and Lawful Civic Expression

We affirm the constitutional rights of citizens to petition, assemble, demonstrate, and express their views peacefully as provided in the Constitution (Sec. 58-61). We appeal to all who choose to protest against CAA3 to do so peacefully, responsibly, and within the law. We emphasize that no protests should become platforms or occasions for violence, destruction of property, intimidation, hate speech or harm to fellow citizens. At all material times, peaceful civic action must preserve human dignity and the common good.

At the same time, we call upon the Government, the police, and all security institutions to facilitate and protect the peaceful exercise of constitutional rights by the citizens. Law-enforcement responses must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and restrained. There must be no arbitrary arrests, collective punishment, intimidation or use of force. For the benefit of citizens, the duty to maintain public order must never be used to silence legitimate dissent.

A Call to Dialogue and National Healing

Zimbabwe does not need factional camps of winners and losers. We need an honest national

conversation that recognises our differences while safeguarding our shared future. We therefore call upon political leaders, Churches, civil society, traditional leaders, business, young people, women, and citizens across the political divide to reject inflammatory language and pursue a principled 'Inclusive National Dialogue' towards national unity, peace, justice and prosperity for all Zimbabweans.

We particularly urge the Government to create and participate in credible space for engagement on the constitutional questions raised by CAA3 and other issues of National interest. We believe that an inclusive national dialogue must not be a substitute for constitutional safeguards; rather, Dialogue should help the nation agree on an inclusive and collective way forward leading to the holding of a National Referendum for CAA3.

The Church's Mandate and Commitment

The ZCC rejects all attempts to portray principled constitutional advocacy as hostility to the State. Furthermore, we reject fallacies that characterise those who hold different views as serving foreign interests. The ZCC is a fellowship of Zimbabwean Churches whose members belong to this nation, bear its burdens, and seek its flourishing. Our contribution to the liberation struggle, to peacebuilding, reconciliation, development, and nation-building bears witness to our enduring love for Zimbabwe. We will continue to speak the truth in love, to defend the dignity and rights of all people, to pray for those in authority, and to offer our good offices toward dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. We speak at such a time as this because silence in the face of deep national polarisation and threats to constitutionalism would be a failure to our priestly, pastoral, and prophetic calling and responsibility.

Our Prayer for Zimbabwe

God of justice and peace, we place Zimbabwe into Your hands. Grant wisdom and humility to those who govern; courage and integrity to those who administer justice; restraint and compassion to those entrusted with public security; and peaceful actions and responsibility to every citizen. Turn us from suspicion and division toward truth, dialogue and reconciliation. May justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Heal our nation and guide us into a future founded upon constitutionalism, dignity, unity and hope. In Jesus Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." - Matthew 5:9

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