

Advent Sunday 29/11/09

Report of a visit to Kuwadzana Parish, Harare

Anglicans in the diocese of Harare CPCA have no one to turn to for justice

I went to the diocesan office this morning at 8.30 to sign 130 confirmation certificates of the candidates I was going to confirm at St. Columbus Church, Kuwadzana, Harare. Rev'd Brian Choto an assistant at St, Paul's Church, Marlborough, Harare telephoned to inform me that they had been driven out of their church by the Kunonga priests. This was in spite of a local arrangement with the resident Kunonga priest that our people could use the church earlier than their allocated time because he has no congregation. They moved out peacefully. I also received a call from Mr. Toshaya a church warden at St Columbus' Church informing me that Kunonga and his priests were gathered at St Columbus' Church. He was wondering if we should find an alternative venue as he anticipated that they would want to cause troubles. I refused to change the venue for this big event in the parish. I stressed the importance of sticking to our allocated time of 12.00 mid-day.

At 10.45am my wife and I drove to the Avenues to pick the rector of St Columbus Church, Kuwadzana Rev'd Dizara and his wife. In spite of the fact that the parish had informed the local police about the big expected gathering at the church, we decided to pass through the police station and reconfirm the events of the day with the police. We stopped by the church and noticed that Kunonga's priests were not allowing any of our people on the church premises and were not showing signs of moving out to allow us in. We went to the police station to seek help. A young policeman came with us. He was not allowed in the church by Kunonga people. He was told that Kunonga had won the court case and that all church properties belonged to him. The young policeman was helpless and completely over foxed by Kunonga and his priests. He called the district police officer who is more senior and the same thing happened to him. He then instructed us not to use our church as per Justice Makarawu's ruling which we have all been observing. This police officer went on to arrest a diocese of Manicaland student from bishop Gaul College, Brian Mrenga who is attached to St. Columbus Church, Kuwadzana for his practicals. He was taking photographs of our congregation outside the church premises and not of the police. He was using a digital camera and could show the police what he had taken but he was still taken to the police station where he was charged with "criminal nuisance". How ridiculous!! Does this mean we can't take photographs of ourselves and our programmes?

It was threatening to rain and I was concerned that we would all be soaked. It was not to be. We had our open air confirmation service which in itself was a tremendous witness to passersby. The singing was out of this world! The confirmants were not disheartened at all. Even the Kunonga priests came out of church to watch what we were doing. When at the end of the service our congregation of over 600 sang "Taropafadzwa" (we have been blessed) – there was not a single person seated. Everybody had their hands in the air and smiling as we sang with great vibrancy! I am greatly encouraged by the faith and courage of our members at this Church.

Our priest (Fr. Dizara) was arrested on the 21st May 2009 on trumped up charges and on the 17th November he was asked to do 105 hours community service. You know God works in mysterious ways indeed! He is to do his community service at Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare! He will be expected to pray for the sick and counsel those in need of counseling.

+Chad Harare