

The Diocese of Harare CPCA - 5th December 2009

The Police at it again!

Having received disturbing news about the plans to disrupt our services on Sunday the 6th November by Kunonga and his priests, we called an emergency meeting of our churchwardens in the diocese. We felt that it was necessary for the church officials to meet at our diocesan office for a briefing. They all came in spite of the short notice. We briefed them about what we had heard. Mr Chingore, our registrar explained the situation to them emphasizing their legal rights. Some of the parishes had already experienced disruptions to scheduled weddings and other programmes that they had in place. Our people were very upset about the recurrence of police interference in church affairs. In the face of the current court ruling on the use of church buildings, the police would appear, in terms to be taking their orders from Kunonga. We encouraged our people to be vigilant and to keep the law authorities informed about any threats and potential conflicts in their parishes. We encouraged them not to take the law into their own hands. At the same time we told them to stand up for their rights and to keep everyone informed.

2nd Sunday in Advent – 6th December 2009

I started receiving calls from our clergy about heavy police presence on church premises. The police claimed to have orders to stop all our services from today onwards. Mr. Chingore, our diocesan registrar, was bombarded by telephone calls from our clergy who wanted to know what to do and why they were being barred from using their churches. The police were literally enforcing an order to prevent our people from worshipping today. I was due to conduct a confirmation service at St Michaels Church in Mbare high density suburb at 11.30am. The parish priest there telephoned to say we could not use the building because the police had told them not to do so. He wondered if they should find another venue. I told him not to and that I was going to try and see the police commissioner. The diocesan registrar telephoned me in order to brief me about the turn of events in the parishes. We agreed that we should go to the Harare Central Police Station and see the police commissioner on duty and seek clarification to the ugly turn of events. She was not in the office. Her subordinate called her and we were able to speak with her on our cell phone. She claimed that the police were in our churches to maintain law and order. She admitted that Kunonga had told them that the diocesan properties belonged to his group and that we were not supposed to use them. This was in spite of both the fact that the police have Justice Makarawu's court ruling that we should share the buildings until the case was brought to the high court and our appeal against judge Hlatshwayo's ruling which had given our diocesan properties to Kunonga. The registrar explained the situation to her and asked her to clarify how and when the police started taking orders from Kunonga. She insisted that there was no order from higher up in the police force or government to stop us from using our buildings. The registrar requested her to command her police officers stopping our people from using their buildings to leave. The order took a while to filter down. I was able to conduct my confirmation service much, much later. There was

much ululating when the police were leaving and the patient and determined Christians started singing 'Onward Christian soldiers' as they danced their way into the church. We confirmed 89 people.

Wedding at St. Faith's Church, Budiro were disrupted and forced to cancel. A number of parishes in Harare could not hold their Sunday services because the police prevented them. However, the faith, commitment and courage of the people of this diocese is very humbling and encouraging indeed. I can openly state that in spite of the disturbances and hardships our people are facing, there is some kind of a revival taking place in our church.

We are very concerned that according to the police officers the orders to disrupt our services and stop us from using our churches are coming from the Commissioner General himself. We are equally concerned that the police seem to be taking orders from Kunonga. Our people are observing the law regarding the sharing of buildings for worship but the police are treating them as criminals for observing the law. Does this mean that our police have nothing else to do and so they have to occupy themselves by preventing us from worshipping God in our church buildings?

We are asking all our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion to continue praying for us. We are asking our brothers and sisters in other denominations and ZCC (The Zimbabwe Council of Churches) to remember us in their prayers and support us in our struggle for justice. Today it is us, who knows who might be next?

+Chad Harare.