



Pastoral Message on Constitutional Amendment No. 3

“In Defence of Truth, Justice, and the Voice of the People”

19 March 2026

“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mk 8:36)

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. At this critical juncture in our nation’s history, we, your shepherds, call for calm reflection, moral courage, and unwavering honesty. The proposed Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026, challenges the very foundation of our shared life together. It raises profound questions about governance, trust, and the common good—the conditions that enable every person and community to flourish in dignity and peace. Our Constitution is more than law; it is a solemn covenant, born from the overwhelming will of Zimbabweans in 2013, embodying our collective hopes for justice, unity, peace, and prosperity.

The Voice of the People Must Remain Supreme

2. All legitimate authority flows from the people. This truth, rooted in our humanity and echoed in sacred wisdom, was reaffirmed in the 2023 elections, when citizens entrusted leaders with a five-year mandate ending in 2028. As Scripture teaches, governing powers are “instituted by God” to serve the good of all, not themselves. Yet proposals that shift power from the electorate to a few—such as weakening direct presidential elections, extending terms without fresh consent, or bypassing safeguards like referendums—diminish this sacred trust.
3. President Mnangagwa has often said, “the voice of the people is the voice of God” (*vox populi, vox Dei*). We hold dear this wisdom. To sideline it risks fracturing the bonds of *ubuntu/unhu*, where true leadership builds up the whole community, not just a part. The common good demands that citizens actively participate in decisions affecting their future, through principles like subsidiarity—empowering lower levels of society—and solidarity—sharing responsibility for all. When the people’s role fades, so too does the legitimacy of rule.

Strong Institutions: Pillars of National Life

4. Peace endures not by force, but through fair, transparent, and independent institutions. Elections, justice, and reconciliation bodies must serve every citizen equally, fostering healing in our divided land. Weakening electoral oversight, judicial appointments, or commissions for peace erodes public confidence and deepens wounds. As the Psalmist proclaims: “Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage” (Ps 33:12)—a blessing realised when leaders prioritise righteousness and justice. Proverbs urges: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Prov 31:8–9). Institutions aligned with the common good unite us; those captured by narrow interests divide.

The Erosion of Democratic Sovereignty

5. We are deeply concerned that the amendments proposed in the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026 collectively move power away from the citizens and consolidate it within the Executive.
 - **Removal of Direct Elections:** The right to directly elect the President is a core mechanism of citizen sovereignty. Moving this power to Parliament distances executive authority from the popular consent of the people.
 - **Unilateral Term Extensions:** In 2023, you elected representatives for five-year terms. Extending these terms to seven years without seeking a new mandate from the voters undermines democratic legitimacy.
 - **The Circumvention of Safeguards:** Section 328(7) of our Constitution explicitly prevents incumbents from benefiting from term extensions. To sidestep this via amendment, without a referendum, creates a “glaring contradiction” and threatens the very existence of our constitutional democracy.

Weakening of Independent Institutions

6. A healthy democracy requires checks and balances. The proposed changes risk turning independent pillars into partisan instruments:
 - **The Judiciary and Prosecution:** Increasing presidential control over the appointment of judges and the Prosecutor-General risks political influence and undermines public trust in justice.
 - **Electoral Integrity:** Transferring responsibilities such as delimitation and the voters’ roll away from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to less independent bodies dilutes the transparency required for free and fair elections.
 - **Partisanship of Traditional Leaders:** Permitting Chiefs to act in a partisan manner fundamentally alters their role as unifying community leaders and combined with more presidential appointees, grants the Executive dominance over the Senate.

A Direct Appeal to Our Leaders: Heed Your Conscience

7. To our Honourable Members of Parliament and Senators, we speak with deep respect and fraternal concern. You bear a sacred duty before God and the nation: to govern for the common good, not personal or partisan gain. Pressures—be they bribes, threats, or promises—may tempt you, but hear Christ’s call: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10:28).
8. *Chokwadi chinokunda/ iqiniso liyanqoba*—truth prevails. Let conscience guide you: reject any change that silences the people. History will judge whether you safeguarded their voice or betrayed it. Choose integrity, for “love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10).

For the True Common Good, Return to the People

9. If these amendments genuinely serve the nation’s welfare, let the people affirm them. Matters of such gravity demand transparency, wide consultation, and, where required, a referendum—honouring the Constitution’s own protections. The common good is not imposed from above; it emerges when all contribute, in solidarity and subsidiarity. The Constitution belongs to every Zimbabwean; it must remain in their hands.

A Call to All Citizens

10. This is a moment for prayerful responsibility, not fear or strife. Stay informed, speak wisely, and act peacefully. Embody truth, justice, and mutual respect—values that transcend creed and unite us as one people.

Conclusion

11. Our choices today shape tomorrow. Future generations will ask: Did we defend the people's voice? May we answer with conviction: yes, we stood for truth and the common good.

12. We commend Zimbabwe to Almighty God: Grant our leaders, wisdom to serve justly, strengthen us in unity, peace, and courage. May Your steadfast love be upon us, even as we hope in You (Ps 33:22).

The peace of Christ be with you all.

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