



Zimbabwe Council of Churches

Voices of Hope



Newsletter

August 2024 Issue



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ZCC General Secretary; Editorial Note



A file picture of ZCC General Secretary Rev. Wilfred Dimingu

Greetings in the name of our risen and ascended Lord Jesus the Christ,

We are grateful to God Almighty for the success of the 47th Biannual ZCC General Assembly which was held from 25 to 27 July 2024, in Harare at Kentucky Ecumenical Center under the theme Breaking Walls, Building Bridges and projecting the future: John 17: 6-11.

The 2024 General Assembly coincided with the Celebration of ZCC 60th Anniversary when we are celebrating 60 years of God's work in Zimbabwe, in the African regional boards and beyond.

This General Assembly was preceded by the ZCC Supervisory Council, Youth Leadership Program, Women Leadership Development Program and the Men's Leadership Development program reflecting deeply on various issues which includes Climate change and the role of the Church, Drug abuse and the role of the Church, Democracy, Constitutionalism and Rule of law, Tax justice convention and the Humanitarian Situation in Zimbabwe.

The deliberations, resolutions, and prayers shared during the Assembly reaffirm our collective dedication to our Theology of accompaniment and to be the salt and light in our nation.

As the ZCC General Secretary and the Secretariat, we would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to President, Bishop Ignatius Makumbe, and his Vice Bishop Kenneth Sibanda on their election to serve the Council in their second and final term.

Their leadership and vision will undoubtedly guide us as we continue our mission to advance the Kingdom of God and strengthen the role of the church in our Zimbabwean society. May the Lord grant them wisdom and grace as they lead the Council for the next two years

As we move forward together, may we remain steadfast in our faith and resolute in our work, ensuring that the church remains a beacon of hope and transformation for all.

I would want to thank all Heads of the ZCC Member Churches and all General Assembly delegates for their valuable contributions, and we look forward to the fruits that will emerge from our efforts.

Happy Reading



The Church Must Defend the Constitution!



Picture of H.E President of Zimbabwe E.D. Mnangagwa

The recent Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) General Assembly in Harare has emerged as a pivotal gathering, reaffirming the Church’s role as a guardian of the people’s will and a staunch defender of the national Constitution.

The assembly highlighted that leadership transcends party lines and is a fundamental national concern.

In a bold stance against calls from certain factions within the ruling ZANU-PF party to extend H.E. President Mnangagwa’s tenure beyond the constitutionally mandated two terms, the ZCC pledged its theological mandate to uphold the integrity of the Constitution.

This initiative, despite H.E.’s statements regarding the importance of term limits, has ignited a strong backlash both within his party and among the public, leading to significant concerns about the future of democracy in Zimbabwe.

The push for President Mnangagwa to extend his time in office persists, even as he has publicly affirmed his dedication to adhering to the national constitution and its stipulated term limits in recent speeches.

The push from some groups and individuals in ZANU-PF for an extension of the incumbent term of office was dismissed as a ‘non-event,’ emphasizing that Zimbabwe is not a one-party state and that national discussions must occur at a broader level.

Speaking during the assembly, Professor Lovemore Madhuku emphasised the sanctity of the Constitution, stating,

“The constitution was made for excellent leaders that they may not overstay their term of office and not for the bad ones who are easily voted out by the people through elections”

Madhuku’s words resonated with attendees, reinforcing the notion that true leadership requires adherence to established laws.

Echoing Madhuku’s sentiments, ZCC General Secretary Rev. Wilfred Dimingu declared that the Church will stand firmly with the people who voiced their desires during the 2013 Constitution-making process.

“The Church will stand by the people and will defend the constitution and not the selfish wishes of individuals and parties,” he asserted.

With fresh threats to constitutional integrity looming, Madhuku has urged the Church to return to its roots as defenders of democracy, reminding attendees of its pivotal role in ensuring that citizens’ voices are heard amid political turbulence.

“The Church’s historical role as a voice for the voiceless is a testament to its ability to protect the constitution and uphold the people’s will.” Said Madhuku.

The Church’s unwavering commitment to upholding constitutional limits in leadership and prioritizing national interests over party agendas is a testament to its dedication to democratic principles.

According to Madhuku, the Church has been vocal since the late 90s clamouring for a people-centred constitution made successful through the National Constitution Assembly (NCA).

He quickly regretted the political animalism coupled with immaturity which he admitted took control of him and the late Morgan Tsvangirai to make the NCA a political institution.

The ZCC’s stance has sent a clear message to those who seek to undermine the Constitution.

The Church has positioned itself as a crucial player in safeguarding Zimbabwe’s democratic principles and ensuring a peaceful transition of power.



Participants following the proceedings during the side session



Drug and Substance Abuse: A Threat to National Peace

By Tawanda Mafuta and Davison Marenga



Mr T. Mafuta facilitating the side session of Drug and Substance Abuse

The recently concluded 47th General Assembly held in Harare shed light on a pressing issue that has gripped most families and the nation at large; “drug and substance abuse”, which is wracking havoc and threatening national cohesion and peace.

President E.D Mnangagwa earlier this year emphasized that drug and substance abuse is not just a personal issue but a national problem that demands urgent attention, calling all hands on deck in dealing with the scourge.

The President launched the Zimbabwe Multisectoral Drug and Substance Abuse Response Strategy on the 26th of June indicating the immense efforts being put by the government in fighting the problem the nation is facing.

According to a UNICEF report on drug use, one of the most serious public health and socio-pathological threats facing adolescents and young people is substance abuse, which has long-term impacts on their well-being and future.

There is a rise in drug abuse among the young generations in Zimbabwe. The gender distribution on alcohol, drugs and other substance use currently stands at (41%) in girls compared to boys (59%).

Fears are that when these young persons are intoxicated they engage in risky behaviors as they will be unable to control their actions.

“The most vulnerable is the girl child as they are usually taken advantage of once they are intoxicated and sometimes end up indulging into unprotected sexual intercourse exposing them to diseases like HIV,” said one participant during the discussion.

Research indicates that people who use drugs are most likely to be infected with sexual intercourse-related diseases with 22% more prone to contract HIV than those who do not.

Causes of Drug and Substance Abuse

The 47th General Assembly also brought to light several factors that are said to be contributing to the escalating rates of drug and substance abuse, particularly among the youth in Zimbabwe. Unemployment remains one of the primary catalysts, leaving many young people feeling hopeless about their futures. The youths which represent the majority in the country are not employed.

“The majority of the youths, -most of which are university graduates are not employed leaving them with no option but to find solace in drugs,” said a youth during the side sessions.



Cont'

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in its 2020 report notes that -rising unemployment and lack of opportunities will make it more likely that poor and disadvantaged people

engage in harmful patterns of drug use, suffer drug use disorders and turn to illicit activities linked to drugs — either production or transport. The prevailing economic meltdown exacerbates this uncertainty, as job opportunities dwindle and financial stability becomes a distant dream. Most families are disintegrated as most parents leave young children behind in search of greener pastures.

“The sanctity of the family is no longer revered in the country as children are being left behind without guardians or grandparents who will not be taking good care of them,” said a parent.

These youths are yielding to peer pressure which plays a significant role, with many youths succumbing to the influence of their social circles. Drugs are used as a way of escaping issues affecting them –including physical abuse, trauma among others- not only among the youths but even with the older generation.

Problems Arising from Drug Abuse

The consequences of rampant drug and substance abuse are dire, manifesting in various social issues. There has been a noticeable increase in crime rates, with armed robbery and theft becoming a common means for addicts to fund their habits.

Reports indicate that drug syndicates have infiltrated communities, including law enforcement agencies, which are often accused of accepting bribes from drug peddlers.

“The police know the drug syndicates but they do not arrest them because they know that they are benefiting from them. The drug paddlers frequent public places like bus termini where the police will be there but they are not arrested,” said a concerned participant.

The mental health crisis is deepening, with rising cases of suicide and other psychological issues among users. More than 60% of admissions in mental health institutions can be traced to drug and illegal substance abuse.

Communities are now grappling with the fallout from this epidemic, as families are torn apart and social cohesion disintegrates.

Most of the girls are using drugs to sell sex without any remorse, and usually they are at a higher risk of experiencing GBV, including sexual violence, due to factors such as coercion, exploitation, and engagement in risky behaviors to sustain their drug use.

It was also discovered during the meeting that drug and substance abuse is often linked to acts of violence. One participant during the session highlighted that drugs were used by perpetrators of the Gukurahundi atrocities, who killed thousands without remorse.

Politicians are also taking advantage of the desperate youths by giving those drugs to them so that they do their dirty work. Individuals involved in political violence have also been known to use drugs, which freezes their conscience and allows them to commit inhumane acts.

The Role of the Church

The Church leaders must take the leading step in addressing the problem that the nation is now facing, utilising the pulpit platforms to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse, and encouraging congregations to engage in discussions about the challenges facing their communities.

The Church’s involvement in peaceful demonstrations against drug abuse has also garnered attention, highlighting the need for collective action.

The church must also collaborate with other CSOs and the government in dealing with the problem by rehabilitating victims and drug addicts. During the meeting, Ms Laiza Chimboho from the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training appreciated the church for taking a deliberate move in responding to drug and substance abuse and partnering with the government in its national vision and plans.

“The strategy that was launched by His Excellence the President of Zimbabwe emphasizes the importance of collaboration and partnership among government entities and stakeholders including you the church to tackle drug-related issues and safeguard the future of the nation and our young people”. Says Chimboho.

As Zimbabwe grapples with the scourge of drug and substance abuse, it is evident that a multifaceted approach is necessary.

The collaboration between government, law enforcement, community organizations, and religious institutions is crucial in reclaiming the future for the nation’s youth and restoring peace in communities across the country.



Unlocking Economic Power: ZCC Champions Women’s Opportunities

By Yeukai Kaponda

In a progressive initiative for women’s empowerment, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) convened a pivotal side session during the recently held 47th General Assembly held in Harare.

This transformative gathering aimed to unlock economic opportunities for women through targeted skills development and enhanced access to financial resources.

With the participation of 29 bishops’ wives and women entrepreneurs from ZCC member churches, the session sought to equip attendees with essential knowledge, and tools to launch and manage their businesses, fostering a supportive ecosystem that promotes self-reliance and financial independence.

The session also aimed to address gender-based violence (GBV) by bolstering women’s economic security and social standing, marking a significant step toward a more equitable future.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive global issue, disproportionately impacting women and girls. In many communities, women face economic insecurity and limited access to resources, making them more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and violence.

Speaking during the opening of the side session, Mrs Makumbe, the spouse of the president of ZCC Bishop Makumbe, highlighted that women play an important role in society and there is a need to come together to promote women.

“Women are the architects of our society and play a vital role in uplifting moral behavior,” said Mrs Makumbe.

The training focused on bishops’ wives as trainers of trainers, equipping them with the skills to support economically vulnerable women in their communities. These bishops’ wives, who work closely with women lacking opportunities for self-reliance, are now better prepared to foster economic independence and reduce vulnerability to GBV.

Mrs. Gurupira presented entrepreneurship and business skills for small enterprises. She pointed out that women should use their God-given gifts to do projects that generate income for themselves and the household.



In the picture above, Mrs Mwararire and other women showcasing their exhibitions

“Financial independence reduces gender-based violence in the homes as most violence emanates from limited household resources,” said Mrs. Gurupira.

One of the women entrepreneurs, Mrs Mawarire, emphasized the importance of women supporting each other for business growth.

“There is much that we can do as women if we support each other, creating better opportunities for another fellow woman, and this is key in entrepreneurship,” she said.

During the interaction of the side session, various women in the entrepreneurship sector from ZCC member churches displayed and exhibited their products.

This was also part of the sensitization of other women on entrepreneurship skills development through experience sharing and the exhibition of products.



Women viewing the exhibitions during the women economic empowerment side session



ZCC Advances Economic Governance, Accountability, and Tax Justice for a Just Future

By Sandra Munemo



Participants following a presentation during the launch of the ZAC Tax campaign

The clergy supported by economic governance experts from the academia, civil society and church punctuated day 3 of the 47th edition of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches General Assembly with sobering reflections on economic governance, accountability and transparency and tax justice.

This culminated in the launch and localization of the global Zacchaeus Tax Campaign, a campaign that calls for a transformation in the global economic system that would, like Zacchaeus, return at least some of the monies owed by multinational corporations and the extremely wealthy.

During the deliberations, participants discussed that the current economic governance spectrum in Zimbabwe is chaotic, characterized by lack of transparency, accountability, nepotism and a high corruption index.

This was vivified by snippets from the Auditor General's report that, demonstrated gross financial mismanagement in both government ministries and local authorities. For instance, the 2023 Auditor General report showed that there is excess spending of unallocated revenue by the government with the government having overspent by over 200 percent, albeit without parliamentary approval.

Regrettably, this overspending did not translate to an improvement in social development

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Regrettably, this overspending did not translate to an improvement in social development with the Report showing that there is an underutilization of funds for the social development services.

The participants further deliberated the unjust tax system obtaining in the country which is heavily taxing individuals instead of corporates. The 2024 budget for instance is 98 percent funded by a raft of taxes which are impacting employees earnings, quality of life and the use of plastic money, thus, detrimental to the overall performance of the economy in the long run.

Despite the natives being overburdened by the taxes, the clergy bemoaned how foreign companies plundering the country's finite mineral wealth were exempted from paying taxes by being accorded tax holidays.

The ZCC President Bishop Makumbe registered his displeasure with how the mineral wealth was vanishing without changing the plight of Zimbabweans and called for a cessation of mining activities by foreign companies to preserve the mineral wealth.

"Why are we relying of foreign companies to exploit our mineral wealth? If we have no capacity, let's preserve the minerals; a generation of technically skilled Zimbabweans will rise and exploit the mineral wealth for the benefit of the country," he said.



Leadership Crisis in Focus; ZCC General Secretary addresses the YLDP 2024

By Promise Mupfigo

The General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) Reverend Wilfred Dimungu delivered a thought-provoking theological reflection on the state of leadership in the country during the Youth Leadership Development Programme 3rd Cohort that was held at Kentucky Hotel recently.

Rev Dimungu raised critical questions regarding the current leadership landscape.

“Are the people in leadership positions truly leaders?” he asked,

Rev Dimungu pointed to a troubling trend of poor leadership that has persisted across institutions and urged participants to consider why such failures continue to occur. Emphasis was also put on the new leaders to be inspired by the spirit of Christ for them to be good leaders in the future.

“Does the Spirit of Christ still inform and inspire leadership? You must be inspired so that you can be good leaders in your communities,” he added.

Drawing from scripture in Mathew 20:28, he highlighted Jesus Christ as the ultimate model of transformational leadership. He articulated that true leadership is rooted in service to others rather than self-interest.

“For leadership to be transformative, it has to be a life of service,” he stated

The General Secretary also emphasized key transformational leadership characteristics that young leaders should strive to embody, including emotional intelligence through self-awareness, the importance of having a clear vision, and the need to empower others by fostering a shared vision despite challenges, as illustrated by the Parable of the Sower.



ZCC General Secretary Rev W. Dimungu giving theological reflections at YLDP 2024

Luke 4:18-24 highlighted the significance of compassion and community care that must be embodied by true leaders. Philippians 2:8 further encouraged attendees to embrace their uniqueness and be change agents in their leadership approaches,”

The YLDP ran from July 23 to 27 at the Kentucky Hotel in Harare where 38 (20 females, 18 males) participants attended drawn from across ZCC member Churches and community leaders in collaboration with ZIMCODD.

The program also ran on the sideline of the ZCC 47th General Assembly. So far, the YLDP has nurtured more than 100 youth leaders through 3 cohorts, having started in July 2022.



Youth participants during training of the 2024 YLDP



Participants having group discussions



Local Solutions for Local Problems :Case Study

By Josphine Munhape

Walking through Mubaiwa village in Dorowa, Manicaland Province, I was struck by how well the forest had survived. The Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority does not provide uninterrupted electricity service in the Mubaiwa community. Local Residents stated that they are unable to use liquefied petroleum (LP) gas because they are kilometers away from the sources of LP gas. Additionally, most of them are terrified of the explosive nature of gas and the high cost associated with it.

With all of these alternatives booted out, how does the community fuel its daily activities, particularly cooking? And, given the well-woven and dense forest, how are they managing? What other possibilities are there?

Seeing the bewilderment on my face, the young lady I was chatting to had a cheerful countenance.

“We have no other options except for our forests” Surprising, right? The second question was how they kept their forest in good condition, particularly given the strong demand for fuel. Along the road between Nyazura and Buhera, firewood selling is a thriving business; how does Mubaiwa hamlet maintain its forest?

“Through our Village Head, we have resolved that forestry resources, particularly firewood, do not leave our village for charitable or commercial objectives. This has helped us to sustain our forest and manage its resources efficiently.”

According to the young lady, this bylaw has enabled the community to use their forest to fuel wood sustainably. She recently remarked that the community was debating the prospect of planting the remaining seed of each fruit tree that a person consumes wherever they are, whether on the road or in their home. They asserted that this would enhance their tree density, resulting in more nutritious trees for the community and maybe more fuel.



Picture collage of how villagers in Manicaland Province are conserving trees and forest

On the other side of Manicaland, in Makoni District’s Muziti village, the residents decided to grow gum trees around their homes. These were to provide the necessary firewood, promote sustainable use, and protect indigenous woods. The practice has been running for almost 26 years. The elders of the village stated that this is a practice that they have passed down to the younger generations, and it was well appreciated. The idea emerged after seeing more disputes due to firewood shortages.

“Families grew in numbers throughout time, and there have been increased cases of firewood-related disputes. We, therefore, determined that each home should plant eucalyptus trees and furnish their firewood demand. Though growing trees takes time, we are now reaping the advantages, and younger generations are continuing to plant trees.”

The thriving trees you see in the mountains are proof of a wise decision made a long time ago.”

Gogo Mazire, the narrator, went on to explain that the indigenous forest is renewing as a result of the community’s positive actions. They no longer fight over firewood, and the community’s conflict issues have been addressed.



picture collage of villagers in Makoni have preserved indigenous trees near their huts



Key highlights of the ZCC General Assembly Week



Bishops during the official opening of the ZCC 47th General Assembly



Women participants following discussions during the Drug and Substance Abuse side session



ZCC President Bishop I. Makumbe and ZCC General Secretary Rev W. Dimingu following the proceedings of the General Assembly



Companies showcasing their products and services during the ZCC 47th General Assembly



Companies showcasing their products and services during the ZCC 47th General Assembly



ZCC Congratulates all the incoming National Executive Committee for the Youth Ecumenical Fellowship (YEF) 2024 -2026

Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Pritchard Madanyika
Youth President(2024-2026)

Pritchard Madanyika, a 29-year-old Zimbabwean Church of Christ member, is a theologian and pastor passionate about sharing the gospel and math. He works as a math tutor and is studying further to empower Zimbabwe's youth, aiming for discipline, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial skills.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Lisa-Marie Tariro Shereni
Youth Vice President(2024-2026)

Lisa-Marie Tariro Shereni (29) from the Anglican Church of the Province of Central Africa is a dedicated education administrator committed to the growth and development of every child. With a degree in Sociology and currently studying Human Resources Management, she intends to promote ZCC youth platforms nationwide to encourage youth participation in community activities.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Godwin Makuyana
Youth Secretary(2024-2026)

Godwin Makuyana (28) is a dynamic leader and the current President of the Christian Youth Fellowship of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. He holds a bachelor's degree in Development Studies. Godwin envisions a future where young people are equipped to take charge of their destinies, inspiring them to transform dreams into reality through faith and action.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Simbaashe Sisanani
Youth Vice Secretary(2024-2026)

Simbaashe is a young Christian leader who is passionate about youth participation in social and developmental processes currently serving as the Connexional Youth President for the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. He is a Mathematician and work as a Mathematics and physics tutor. As an Alumni of the ZCC Youth Leadership Programme, Simbaashe strives to push for youths to participate in key decision making processes within the Church and the community.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive




Tichaona Mapira
Treasurer(2024-2026)

Tichaona Mapira (27) is currently serving as an elder with the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. He believes in embracing optimism and joy to honor the life we've been given, and living with humility. As he assumes this position, he envisions a youth movement where every young person is empowered to take charge of their environment.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Angelic-Phoebe Molen
Committee Member (2024-2026)

Angelic-Phoebe Molen (32) from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, from the Archbishopric of Zimbabwe and Angola is a university student studying towards a Honors Degree in Geography and Environmental Studies and the National Coordinator of my church on programmes of Ecology and Climate Change. As a First Female ordained Deaconess in the Eastern Orthodox Church globally, her vision is to help women and young girls to fully participate in programmes to do with Climate Change.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Valeria Rudo Chinzou
Committee Member (2024-2026)

Valeria Rudo Chinzou(20) from the Anglican Diocese of Masvingo is a student pursuing a degree in Human Resources Management. As a young leader, Valeria envisions equal participation and advancement of youth centered policies across all sectors. She is a proof that age is just a number - it's the passion, drive, and dedication that truly counts.

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Spotlight On
Zimbabwe Council of Churches Youth Ecumenical Fellowship National Executive



Jethro Ncube
Committee Member (2024-2026)

Jethro Ncube (31) from The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) is a development practitioner whose background ranges on primary school teaching, humanitarian work, community development, peer education and mentoring. Leveraging on his experience and background, Jethro intends to empower youths through education and skills development, foster community engagement and social responsibility, enhance youth leadership and participation that build resilience towards strengthening spiritual and ethical foundations.

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