



*Growing and Serving Together*

## **UGANDA JOINT CHRISTIAN COUNCIL**

### **Christmas Message by the Chairperson of Uganda Joint Christian Council Kampala, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2013**

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord and all people of goodwill: I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ- the Redeemer, Saviour of the world and Prince of Peace! On my own behalf and on behalf of my fellow Church leaders, namely Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga (Archbishop of Kampala Archdiocese) and Metropolitan Jonah Lwanga (Head of Uganda Orthodox Church) with whom I share the responsibility of leading Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), I wish to extend to you our prayers for a happy and joyful Christmas and New Year Day. The birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem in Judea which we shall commemorate on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2013 is an event which has had a profound influence on the history of humanity. His birth has brought joy to many people, for he is the light of the world (John 8:12). However, many people still live in darkness; hence we continue to witness unwarranted suffering in our country and other parts of the world. Therefore, as we prepare to mark the birth of Jesus, we would like to share with you our thoughts on the following: Marriage and Family Life, the Culture of Lawlessness, National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, 2012, the Cancer of Corruption, National Dialogue, and the Conflict in South Sudan.

#### **1. Marriage and Family Life**

Marriage is an institution which God himself ordained at the beginning of creation (Gen 2:21-24). It is a life-long union between **a man** and **a woman** which should not be entered into lightly but thoughtfully and reverently. Parents and children constitute the nuclear family which is the basic unit of our society. The propagation of Christian teachings on marriage and family life as expounded in Scripture is, therefore, a cardinal duty of every believer. This is our message to you married people and all believers: please hold fast to the biblical teachings on marriage and family life. Always bear in mind that marriage must be honoured by all (Heb 13:4). It is your obligation, as a believer to respect and guard the institution of marriage against false teachings. You need to bear in mind that a happy marriage is a product of love, faithfulness, patience, kindness, perseverance and forgiveness. These are enduring values that ought to be cherished by all. Unfortunately, there are very many broken homes in our communities. This is our appeal to you husbands: please love your wives. Share whatever you have with them. In the same vein, we appeal to wives to respect your husbands, regardless of your status in society. Share whatever you have with them. As a husband or wife, you cannot build a strong family or be role models to your children and others if you cannot treat each other with love and respect. The stability

and prosperity of Ugandans is dependent on strong families founded on the principles of love, respect, forgiveness and reconciliation. Some parents have very little time for their children. Parents, please be good role models. Set good examples to your children so that they can grow in an atmosphere where there is love, respect and mutual support.

## **2. The Culture of Lawlessness:**

As we approach Christmas and the New Year, there is likely to be an upsurge in acts of theft, robbery, bad driving on roads and other forms of lawlessness. Many people have already fallen victim to organised thefts that are being carried out by 'purported taxi operators' in Kampala. We would like to appeal to our security personnel to step up crime prevention measures in collaboration with the local leaders and the people. We urge everyone to report any suspicious elements to the security personnel so that appropriate action can be taken. At the same time, we remind those who are bent on hurting innocent people that God detests evil and will in his own time avenge the suffering of the innocent (Dt 32:35). If you were misled into joining a syndicate that is stealing or wreaking havoc on the people- for whatever reason- we ask you to repent so that you can be forgiven for any harm or misery you may have caused to innocent people.

## **3. The National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, 2012**

The Government has published The National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, 2012. The object of the Bill is to provide a regulatory framework that facilitates the safe development and application of biotechnology. The Bill seeks to designate a national focal point and a competent authority. It further seeks to provide mechanisms to regulate research, development and general release of genetically modified organisms and for related matters. According to the Bill, biotechnology, including genetic engineering techniques, is used to process a variety of products including the development of medicines. It is envisaged that the enactment of the Bill will create opportunities for modernisation of agriculture, protection of the environment, enhancement of public health and industrialization. But, scientists hold divergent views with regard to the effects of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) on the environment and quality of food produced which are key issues of focus in the Bill. Some experts argue that GMOs are risky and may cause harm to our environment and the consumers. We are currently having dialogue on the Bill with a cross-section of experts and will soon be in position to pronounce ourselves on the matter. In the meantime, we would like to urge the Government to consult Ugandans as widely as possible on this Bill which may have far reaching implications if it is passed without taking all the necessary precautions. In the same vein, we call upon our Members of Parliament to consult the electorate and listen to their views and proposals.

## **4. The Cancer of Corruption**

We urge the Government to take bold steps to fight corruption which has become a cancer in our nation. The loss of huge amounts of public funds is depriving Ugandans of vital services and infrastructural development which are necessary for propelling us forward socially and economically. So far, progress in the war against corruption is agonizingly slow in relation to the scale and magnitude of the corruption scandals we have recently

witnessed in our public institutions. We do fear that failure by the Government to tackle corruption decisively may lead to the emergence of powerful 'mafia groups' that will have the capability of subverting our institutions and rendering democratic values enshrined in our Constitution meaningless.

## **5. National Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation**

As we move towards General Elections in 2016, it is important to focus on building the infrastructure for national harmony, peace and reconciliation. In particular, we need to focus on historical injustices and other grievances which have caused pain and polarization among some sections of our people. This is, therefore, our message to our political leaders: please abide by the oath of office which you took when you were elected. Treat all Ugandans equally. They are all Ugandans regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds or political affiliations. They need to be served equally without discrimination or any kind of preferential treatment. We earnestly therefore urge the Government and opposition political leaders to explore the idea of a National Convention where all issues and grievances can be interrogated in the spirit of seeking national consensus which is vital for ensuring free and fair presidential, parliamentary and local governments' elections in 2016. We would like the Elections of 2016 to be different from previous elections that were characterised by harassment, intimidation, bribery, violence and other vices. This is a dream that we can realize if we humble ourselves and focus on the common good which is the development, welfare and prosperity of all Ugandans. It is a dream that is anchored on our national motto, "For God and My Country."

## **6. The Conflict in South Sudan:**

South Sudan is a young country that is just beginning to build the necessary institutions of a modern State so that her people can enjoy the fruits of independence. The current armed conflicts in Juba and other parts of the country between factions of the national army which have claimed many lives, including the lives of Ugandans, are regrettable developments which call for urgent intervention. This is our message to our brothers and sisters in South Sudan, especially the political, religious and traditional leaders: please do whatever is necessary to pull the country back from the brink. We urge you all to pursue dialogue which is the only viable means of resolving the current conflict. We, your neighbours, would not like to see South Sudan becoming a failed State where lawlessness will be the order of the day. We do assure you of our love prayers and are ready to accompany you to rally your people and all people of goodwill within and outside South Sudan to champion the cause of peace in your country.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.



The Most Rev. Stanley Ntagali  
**Chairperson of Uganda Joint Christian Council**