

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA

HEAD OFFICE

6th November, 2007

ALL BISHOPS

RE: ARCHBISHOP'S PASTORAL LETTER ON GENERAL ELECTIONS

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

PREAMBLE

Our stated mission as the Anglican Church of Kenya is "To bring all people into a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ; through Preaching, Teaching, Healing and Social Transformation and enabling them to grow in faith and live life in its fullness."

It is from this mission that the church draws its Social Transformative role whereby the church is mandated as the conscience of the nation to be a source of positive influence towards Good Governance, Justice and Equity for all the citizens of this country.

As the country moves towards the period of political campaigns and General Elections, the church would like to draw the attention of the nation to certain issues that affect us in spite of the political, social and economic differences that characterize us as the people of Kenya.

We therefore wish to speak out on the following points of concern:

1. OUR COMMITMENT TO BE NON-PARTISAN

We are aware that when elections are approaching many people need guidance from the church on what to do and what not to do. As a Church we want to remain non-partisan and allow our members to make informed choices. We will continue to engage in educating people on what responsible leadership is. We recognize that all Kenyans whatever their political inclination would be have a right to worship. No Kenyan should be alienated from any religion or faith community because of the policies or candidates they support. We call on religious leaders to exercise wisdom and restraint when commenting on candidates vying for political positions to avoid alienation of sections of their members who prefer other candidates. As for religious leaders seeking elective posts, we urge them to first resign from their positions of church leadership to ensure they retained political impartiality

2. A CALL TO SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Politicians are currently jostling for electoral offices. We wish to state our commitment in urging Kenyans to vote in politicians who will care for their welfare. Political leaders should not be driven by their selfish interests as has happened in the past. We are saddened by the fact that politicians tend to be motivated mainly by the attendant financial benefits that accompany political power. It is our considered stand that the remuneration packages of elected parliamentary representatives should be reviewed to reflect the economic realities in Kenya presently.

Godly leadership is embodied in servant leadership. True leaders are models and mentors. They concern themselves with leaving behind a legacy, not amassing wealth. To this end, we call upon Kenyans who desire to see our country move from mediocrity to purpose and effectiveness to carefully evaluate all candidates for the various electoral offices and interrogate their sense of values. Interact with what they are promising and let them know that they will be held accountable. We urge Kenyans to reject leaders who encourage them to be involved in violent activities.

3. A CALL FOR ALL TO BE TRANSPARENT

Before any Kenyan decides on which Presidential, Parliamentary or Civic leader he or she will vote in, we urge them to carefully interrogate their track record in as far as the management of public funds within their dockets is concerned. In a country where corruption and mismanagement of public funds has reached endemic proportions, we as the electorate must make our contribution towards the total and complete eradication of this vice by refusing to vote for leaders who have a poor integrity record. An example of a good measure of integrity is the manner in which individual MPs have appointed members of their CDF management committees and how these funds have been used and accounted for.

4. ON PUBLIC UTTERANCES AND INCITEMENT

We make a fervent appeal to our politicians to think seriously about Kenya as a unit with a more important future than any individual future of its constituent ethnic groups. Let us all desist from the pursuit of personal and partisan gains at the expense of the future generations of our beloved Kenya.

5. ON TRIBAL POLITICAL PARTIES AND ETHNIC GROUPINGS

In 1992 there was only one political party, when the constitution was amended to allow for multi-party politics. The number has grown and now stands at over 150 parties. Thus the parties have been increasing at the rate of at least 10 per year over the last 15 years. None of the political parties seem to have any concrete ideological focus, instead, they seem to be personality-based, and vehicles for politicians to get into electoral offices. It is now clear that multi party politics, if not properly managed does not necessarily guarantee democracy. If anything, they are creating divisions along tribal lines judging by the kind of political parties that are being registered daily. Democracy comes with a price which at times such as this could be costly in ways not envisaged. One of the prices we have to meet is that democratic boundaries cannot be easily defined or legislated. The fundamental freedoms enshrined in our constitution are such that the freedom to form a political party is guaranteed to a large extent. People join parties or groups because they are led to believe it offers a solution or solace for their needs- material, social, political etc.

We appeal to the Electoral Commission to ensure that there is order in the conduct of elections and that in future the rules of initiation of parties be reviewed.

6. A CALL TO REJECT ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

In the past, Kenyans have been subjected to untold violence and intimidation usually prior to and during general elections. This has been repeated every election year in spite of calls for tolerance and peace. Kenyans are naturally God-fearing, peace loving people and these flare-ups only serve to blemish our history as a nation. We believe that we are a responsible nation and that we are capable of conducting free, fair as well as peaceful elections.

Once again, we passionately appeal to the politicians to make every effort to contain their supporters and take personal responsibility for any violence meted out on innocent people. Incitement is a criminal offence and all who get involved should face the full force of the law.

We are especially saddened by the stories highlighted in the media of intimidation and harassment of women aspirants.

It should be understood that a person's gender or age is not a measure of their capability or lack of it. Besides, in God's eyes all are equal. As a country that has made considerable progress in empowering women, girls and more recently the youth. We must reach a point where we practice fairness and tolerance, allowing all to exercise their right to vie for political offices without being discriminated upon on the basis of gender or age. Ethnicity should not be the basis of enmity and alienation. We deplore ethnic hate speeches, balkanization and political zoning. Leaders should promote peace.

7. ON 'MAJIMBO'

We appeal to our leaders to help Kenyans by defining exactly what they mean when they use the term 'Majimbo' and desist from politicizing the concept. We support devolution only as far as it means taking services and governance closer to the people e.g. devolving power, economic and other resources and governance to the District as a unit. However, if the version of 'Majimbo' being advocated for is going to divide Kenyans along tribal lines, we strongly call upon Kenyans to reject it. While the debate on majimbo is acceptable and healthy for the Nation, we wish to point out that this is not a matter that can be decided upon at the coming general elections Rather it is a fundamental constitutional issue that must be debated in a constitutional review forum and decided upon at a referendum. When Kenyans go to the poll in December, they will be electing the President, Members of parliament and civic leaders and NOT ON A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE.

8. A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR ALL ASPIRANTS

Democracy in Kenya is coming of age and as such, we urge all those vying for political offices to exercise fairness and tolerance. Every Kenyan aspirant at whatever level has a democratic right to vie and should therefore be accorded the necessary assistance and space to woo voters without fear of intimidation or harassment. For example, no one should feel that a certain parliamentary seat 'belongs' to him or her simply because they have held the seat for many years. All aspirants for the seat have equal rights and should have equal access to the voters during the campaigns.

9. ON THE USE OF STATE RESOURCES FOR CAMPAIGNS

As a church, we strongly condemn the use of state resources including taxpayers' money and civil servants like officers within the Provincial Administration to mobilize and campaign. State resources exist for a very clear purpose and making use of them only puts other aspirants at a disadvantage. Besides, this is a highly corrupt practice that greatly undermines the integrity and legitimacy of those who engage in it.

10. FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS

The responsibility to conduct free and fair elections falls on all Kenyans. Creating an environment where democracy is embraced and exercised by all is the prerogative of the incumbent. It is our feeling that the instruments of the state that will ensure the conduct of free and fair elections must be both non-partisan and seen to be non-partisan. As such, the Electoral Commission of Kenya should comprise of an able team of commissioners whose appointment to office is not controversial. This can only be done if the appointments and any other changes are made after wide consultation with all the interested parties.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to pray that God will grant us the grace to see a successful election and that every Kenyan of goodwill will conduct themselves with respect. Kenyans should not allow the elections to leave them divided along ethnic, religious and economic lines. Let us keep away from emotive personality-based campaigns and propaganda and focus on issues of policy that will be implemented after elections. The Electoral Commission and the Government must facilitate peaceful, free, fair and secure elections.

Yours sincerely,

The Most Rev. Benjamin Nzimbi
ARCHBISHOP OF KENYA &
BISHOP OF ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL DIOCESE