THE IMPERATIVE FOR REFORMS (WHY REFORMS)

After the 2015 Presidential and Provincial elections, the church was in a storm. In addition to more than 30 pending Court cases instituted by Pastors, the church was taken to Court by more than 9 loosing former overseers, and by Elder Chitimire. The church was also faced with imminent split as some were not happy with the conduct and outcome of the elections of office bearers. The Church faced an urgent High Court Application to stop the election of the President and the General Secretary which it successfully defended. Some of the Court challenges remain pending to the present day. This plethora of litigation and the litany of discontent could not be addressed under our current Constitutional structure. It exposed the contradictions between the Constitution and the Regulations and the inadequacies of the Constitution. It became mandatory for the Church to undertake Reforms to address the following key areas:

Institutionalized Disparity and inequality in the remuneration of Pastors

There is a huge disparity and inequality in the remuneration of Pastors between those pastoring rich and mostly urban assemblies and those pastoring poor, and mostly rural assemblies and assemblies in marginalized communities. On the extreme, some pastors at rich urban assemblies in Harare take home a monthly salary US$5,000.00 or more while their colleagues who have the same calling, the same qualifications, and the same capabilities pastoring rural Assemblies in Matebeleland South, for example, would take home a paltry South African Rand 300.00 which, in most cases is not paid in full. This rural pastor cannot send children to school. Most of them have had to rely on assistance to send their children to school from Capernaum Trust, a charitable Trust founded by Mr & Mrs Masiyiwa.
They barely afford money to travel the long distances between the assemblies they pastor. They can barely afford to carry funeral expenses for their relatives and family members. When they come to National Conferences at Rufaro, they sleep outside an open fire. They cannot even afford tents for camping. Their colleagues from richer assemblies even have mansions at Rufaro that they only use during conferences. In the face of this inequality, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus becomes an understatement. The parable comes to life in the AFM in Zimbabwe and it manifests in broad daylight during conferences, especially at Rufaro. Financial Reforms had to be undertaken to address this glaring injustice.

**Inadequacies of the Decentralized Financial Management System**

The decentralized financial management system has resulted in a scarcity of resources at National level. The church cannot look after Manhinga village, which has to rely on private donors from within and outside the Church. The church cannot fund any programs to support widows and orphans, including widows and orphans of late pastors. The pension that is intended to carter for retired pastors is woefully inadequate. Some retired pastors and their families including former Presidents and Overseers live in abject poverty. They only get remembered when they die, and only during their funeral. There are no adequate resources to fund infrastructure projects including the development of Rufaro. Employees and Office Bearers at National Level have gone for lengthy periods of time without remuneration. Although revenue collection and utilization is decentralized, the liabilities incurred at Assembly level are centralized at National level. The result is that we have had incidences where the creditors of particular assemblies are able to attach and sell assets from different assemblies. The National Office has had to meet obligations incurred by specific Assemblies. The cases in point include the case of Reverend Mujokeri in Kadoma, Reverend Munyengererwa from Waterfalls and many others who successfully obtained judgments and enforced them against the National Office. Therefore, there is need for a different system of mobilization and management of financial resources that visits liabilities to the point where they are incurred and to the point where revenue is generated. The current system where revenue is decentralized but liabilities are centralized has failed.

**Poor Governance Systems**

The Church’s governance systems lack transparency, accountability and checks and balances. The current Constitutional order sets up the Apostolic Council as a Spiritual body with all administrative powers being vested in an appointed National Administrator. The Constitutional order sets up the offices of President and National Administrator as the most powerful offices. They are virtual constitutional dictatorships. The requirement for the separation of spiritual from administrative or governance matters is not reinforced by structures and systems. The result is the same at assembly and National levels. The pastor runs the Assembly, reports to himself, chairs the board, audits himself develops his own vision, implements it, and evaluates his own performance. The same position obtains in respect of the position of President. Thus, the absence of proper governance structures has resulted in a departure from the Presbyterian church polity on which the AFM in Zimbabwe, as with all members of the Protestant and Pentecostal movements is founded. The Presbyterian system of church governance requires the governance of the Church by a board of Elders who have the same spiritual qualifications accorded to Overseers by Scripture. The pastor, who must also meet the same qualifications set by scripture for an Elder and an Overseer is the teacher of the gospel and the
administrator of sacraments. The Pastor, Overseer, Elder and congregant are all placed at equal footing, with the same access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ under the doctrine of the Universal Priesthood of all saints. This departure from the Presbyterian Church polity has resulted in strange cultic doctrines most of which are driven more by the love of material wealth than by the love of God. The Reforms must address issues of transparency, accountability and checks and balances in the Church governance system.

**Adjudicative System**

The system of adjudication of disciplinary matters is presided over mostly by Pastors. Pastors have no legal training. As a consequence, most decisions made in disciplinary cases have been set aside by the secular courts due to several failures including the failure to comply with basic principles of natural justice. There have been judgements against the church for payment of significant amounts of money that are directly attributable to our faulty adjudicative system. There have also been instances when confidential matters have not been kept confidential and files of past indiscretions have been used to curtail the exercise of rights in some form of blackmail. Therefore, a different judicial system presided over by trained church members is necessary. An adequate and fair domestic adjudicative system will insulate the church from intrusion by secular Courts.

**Electoral Reforms**

The electoral system that was in use based on an electoral college comprising a few individuals handpicked from provinces was susceptible to rigging. This has been the source of a lot of litigation in the past. A different electoral system that could deliver free, fair and credible elections conducted prayerfully to reflect the will and choice of God was required.

**The Constitutional Reform Process**

The decision to undertake Reforms was announced at the Centennial Celebrations in August 2015. The full terms of reference were endorsed by a unanimous resolution of the Workers Council on 11 June 2016. The current Constitutional Reform Committee was constituted in January 2017. The members of the Committee were:

1. Tawanda Nyambirai (Chairman and a member of the Apostolic Council by virtue of being the Head of the Social Welfare and Rufaro Development Departments. He is a lawyer by profession)
2. Reverend Titus I Murefu (a former Deputy President of the AFM in Zimbabwe)
3. Reverend Benson Katakwa (an Overseer of the AFM in Zimbabwe)
4. Reverend Dr Nathan Nhira (a former Overseer of the AFM in Zimbabwe)
5. Reverend Dr Clever Gomba (a former National Youth Leader and currently an Overseer)
6. Reverend Mrs. Vusango (a Pastor of the AFM in Zimbabwe and a Lawyer by profession)
7. Elder Christopher Chemhuru (an accountant by profession)
8. Elder Mahachi (a Human Resources practitioner)
9. Elder Tawanda Matembo (an Accountant by profession)
10. Elder Ganyani (a Human Resources practitioner)
11. Deacon Aaron Mudhuwiwa (a Human Resources Practitioner)
12. Deacon Majachani (a lawyer by profession)

The National Constitutional Reform Committee completed its work and submitted its report to the Apostolic Council in November 2017. At that stage, the full committee was intact. After the submission of the draft Constitution, the pastors who were members of the National Constitutional Reform Committee with the exception of Mrs. Vusango resigned for personal reasons that had nothing to do with the contents of the proposed draft Constitution to which they had contributed and which they had agreed to. Unfortunately, these resignations were falsely used to signify the disagreement by the pastors with the contents of the draft Constitution.

A Workers Council Meeting was held on 28 February 2018 which resolved that Provincial and National Elections must follow the completion of the Reforms. Copies of the draft Constitution were sent to the Overseers with instructions for them to cascade the document down to the grass roots. 4,000 hard copies were also printed. Unfortunately the document was not sent to the grassroots because the distribution channel through the pastors had been compromised as pastors were against the Reforms. A decisive meeting of the Workers Council was finally held on 15 September 2018. Out of a possible 3511 delegates, 2056 delegates comprising more than 50% of the total membership of the Workers Council attended. The meeting Resolved to adopt/ accept the proposed Draft Constitution, but suspended its operation except for the provisions relating to elections. The adoption of the Draft Constitution passed with only 35 delegates present voting against. Even Reverand Chiyangwa, Reverend Chinyemba, Reverend Nhira, Reverend Ndoni and Reverend Nhamburo voted in favour of the adoption of the draft Constitution as can be seen on the video recording of the meeting. Therefor the defection by these members had nothing to do with their objection to the draft Constitution as they now claim.

The Draft Constitution is now to be taken to the grass roots to enable all members of the Church to participate in the completion of the Draft Constitution.

**CORRECTION OF LIES BEING USED AGAINST REFORMS**

It is claimed that the Draft Constitution upholds prophecy above the Bible. This claim is false. The Draft Constitution recognizes the supremacy of the written word of God in Section 2.1.2. However, the Draft Constitution also acknowledges the spoken Word of God in Section 2.1.3. This recognition is in line with the Doctrine of the AFM Churches which recognizes that God is alive, he spoke in the past and He continues to speak today. The draft Constitution does not have any provision that upholds the spoken Word of God above the written Word of God. The Word of God is the Word of God.

It has been claimed that the Draft Constitution requires the baptism of converts under a waterfall. This is false. The wording adopted by the draft on the sacrament of water baptism is adopted from Chapter 7 of the Didache. The Didache is the codification of the teachings administered by the Apostles to gentile converts before Baptism. The version by J B Lightfoot is easily available on the net for ardent scholars of the Bible. Therefore the provisions on Baptism are sound doctrine.

Those against Reforms falsely claim that the draft does not recognize repentance. They falsely claim that the draft only recognizes as Church members, the children of Elders. This is a falsification of provisions relating to the christening or dedication of children and the admission of children in to membership of the Church. The Draft makes it clear that repentance and Baptism are essential requirements of acquisition of membership.

It is claimed that the proposed judges will be full time workers entitled to remuneration and that the Chairman of the Constitutional Reform Committee wants to become a judge in order for him to get
paid by the Church and for the Church to buy a Range Rover for him. This is false. The judges will not be full time employees. They will not be on salaries. They will not have Church cars. In any event, Mr Tawanda Nyambirai declared from the outset that he has no wish to be a judge in the Church.