

## The Alliance of Baptists

### A Statement on Zimbabwe

Adopted April 6, 2002

Almost five years ago, the Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe entered into a partnership, pledging shared visioning for ministry, intentionality in understanding one another's cultures and customs, celebration in times of joy, solidarity in times of hardship, presence in times of sorrow; and mutual friendship and support. As we approach the fifth anniversary of that partnership, we, the Alliance of Baptists, gathered today in Winston-Salem, North Carolina for our Annual Convocation, reaffirm and celebrate our continued fellowship with the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe, with our partner churches, and with Zimbabwean Christian sisters and brothers. We express gratitude for the opportunity to participate in shared ministry, for rich fellowship, and deepening and widening relationships.

However, we are increasingly aware of the adversity which currently besets the nation and the people of Zimbabwe; we offer our continued companionship and unequivocal solidarity, and we sincerely affirm the following:

We stand arm-in-arm with the people of Zimbabwe, and all African nations, in the continued struggle for freedom and democracy. We encourage and uphold the principles of free speech, free press, and the free exercise of the democratic process.

We abhor the violence which has pervaded the political process since the constitutional referendum of February of 2000, and continues even after the recent presidential election. We condemn the actions of those who perpetrate such violence, who resort to beatings, rape and even execution as methods of intimidation and recrimination. We encourage our Baptist sisters and brothers to call for an end to these tactics, and to stand firm in the struggle for peace.

We join our voices with others in the call to our own government and the governments of other developed nations- for forgiveness of debt, the repayment of which perpetuates- poverty and economic disempowerment. We applaud the courage and steadfastness of our Zimbabwean friends, despite spiraling inflation, repeated devaluation of Zimbabwe's currency, and widespread unemployment.

We implore the government of Zimbabwe to allow churches and non-government organizations to assist in the distribution of supplies and other relief assistance in the wake of drought, food shortages, hunger and anticipated starvation. We plead for fair and impartial distribution of goods, regardless of the political affiliation of the recipients. We call upon the government of the United States to be persistent and resourceful in creating effective strategies to provide relief and aid to the people of Zimbabwe.

We grieve as we hear of the continuing onslaught of HIV/AIDS, and its devastation in Zimbabwean families-, Zimbabwean churches- and indeed, the entire nation of Zimbabwe. We call upon our own government and the government of other nations to make available to the people of Zimbabwe and

other African nations the anti-AIDS medications -at affordable prices - which can treat the symptoms of this deadly virus and offer both quality and length of life.

In response to these desperate circumstances which our Zimbabwean sisters and brothers must endure, we renew our commitment to our own education and understanding of the culture and circumstances in which our Zimbabwean friends live, and we seek their prayers for us as we strive to be faithful witnesses to the love, grace and mercy of God, and to the kinship of all God's people.

Finally, we pledge our earnest and constant prayers:

- for healing rains to end the drought and abundant harvests to end the hunger; for cessation of violence,
- for forgiveness and restoration of calm, for genuine peace; for health and wholeness of body and of spirit;
- for courage and strength in the daily challenges of living; for wisdom and discernment in the difficult decisions faced by individuals, families, and governments;
- for freedom, self-determination, and genuine liberty;
- for a renewed and renewing hope in the sure and evident inbreak of the kingdom of God on earth;
- and for God's abiding peace and richest blessings in the journey.