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NEWS RELEASE: From the National Office of the ELCIC

ELCIC National Bishop Calls for Prayers for Zimbabwe on January 25

Winnipeg, 21 January 2009--Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) National Bishop Susan C. Johnson says the ELCIC joins in solidarity with Africans and others around the world in praying for a return to peace to Zimbabwe and, "calls on all ELCIC congregations to pray for our Zimbabwean sisters and brothers," on Sunday, January 25.

At the 9th General Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Assembly declared January 25 as African Day of Prayer and Fasting for Zimbabwe.

The call for prayer comes at a time of increasing need for the people of Zimbabwe. In a letter sent by Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko on December 16 to LWF member churches in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Noko urged advocacy to the region's governments and leaders, "to act in the most responsible - but determined and unwavering - manner to relieve Zimbabweans of the burden they have already carried for far too long."

The economic, political and social decline in Zimbabwe has taken a disastrous toll on the country's food supply and medical institutions: the BBC reports that 5 million people, almost half the entire population, are in need of food; a cholera epidemic has spread to over 37,000 people and killed 2,200; the Zimbabwe dollar has inflated at such an alarming rate that it has been rendered useless to the point where most people must use foreign currency to pay for basic necessities.

Congregations may wish to use the following prayer on Sunday, January 25:

O God of hope, sovereign of the nations, today, with the All Africa Conference of Churches, we pray for all Zimbabweans and their wounded nation, also remembering before you our sisters and brothers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. Help the people of Zimbabwe, with the support of others, to find a process for building peace in which all national actors, regional organizations and the international community are engaged. Give us courage, in whatever ways we can, to support the people of Zimbabwe in rebuilding their nation with peace and justice for all. We pray this in the name of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.