



## **PRESS RELEASE FROM THE IRCU COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS**

### **Members of the Press**

### **Fellow Ugandans**

We greet you all in the name of the Almighty!

The Council of Presidents with great sadness learnt of the unfortunate demolition and vandalism of St. Peter's Church of Uganda, Ndeeba that happened on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020 in total disregard of Minister of lands directives. It is blasphemy for one to demolish God's sanctuary and manifestation of the highest level of moral decay in our country.

The Council of presidents strongly condemns this act because destruction of a church is destruction of a mosque and indeed a destruction of all worship places.

The council wishes to extend its sympathies to His Grace The Most Rev. Steven Kaziimba Mugalu, Arch Bishop of the Province of the Church of Uganda and co-chair IRCU Council of Presidents, the diocese of Namirembe, the congregation of St. Peter's church and indeed all God-loving Ugandans.

We wish to thank H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda for quickly responding by directing Lt. Col. Edith Nakalema to apprehend all the culprits. We call for the speedy investigation of this matter and bring to book all the culprits.

### **Update on the re-opening of worship places**

Following the 18<sup>th</sup> Presidential address during COVID-19 pandemic, His Excellency the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni advised that the Ministry of Health and IRCU should work on SOPs for safe reopening of worship places.

Consequently, the Council of Presidents, together with Ministry of Health and senior Presidential advisor on epidemiology, Dr Monica Musenero have developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and an orientation manual. The objectives of the training manual include:

- a) To provide step by step guidance for managing of places of worship to implement COVID-19 prevention and control measures;
- b) To train religious leaders on COVID-19 control measures;
- c) Create awareness among stakeholders on the potential risks of transmission in places of worship and the mitigation measures;
- d) To ensure District Task Forces have oversight on COVID -19 control measures in places of worship.

As we speak to you, we have made a lot of progress in rolling out the training of ordained and non-ordained leaders in our respective structures. We are confident that the training of the leadership in our structures will build the capacity of our leaders to create safe environments that will contain the infections and manage the spread of COVID 19.

**Working together for rule of law peaceful, credible, free and fair elections.**

Since 2006, IRCU has been engaged in Uganda's electoral processes. This has been against the declining trend in respect for freedom of expression, the narrowing civic and political space; concern about the increasing monetization of elections; violence in elections; persistent challenges of limited participation of women, youth and PWDs in elections; the lack of equal access to media and the gross apathy among the electorate.

As a council, we would like to work together with political and non-political actors; with the state and Government to address the above challenges that are undermining the growth of our democracy in what we have called; **working together for a peaceful, credible free and fair elections 2020/21.**

As a Council, we are concerned about how regulations and presidential directives are being enforced by the security agencies and indeed the Electoral Commission. We are witnessing lack of equal access to the media and the police discriminately dispersing crowds and political contenders. There is lack of consistency and clarity by the Electoral Commission on elections.

As Council, we would like to call upon political actors and electoral managers to engage in a win-win dialogue on how to access media space equitably; how to enforce the regulations uniformly and agree on the mode of campaigns.

**Second edition of the Presidential and Constituency Candidates debates**

As a council together with our partners, The Elder's Forum (TEFU) and Inter Party Organization for Dialogue (IPOD), we are happy to announce the second edition of the presidential and constituency candidates' debates.

As you are aware, IRCU and TEFU with support from UNDP, organized the first ever presidential candidates debates in 2016 general elections. The country was excited about these debates and have since encouraged us to institutionalize candidates' debates in our body politic.

The candidate's debates are a neutral dignified forum or platform where candidates or political leaders are given opportunity to sell their agenda to the electorate and in the case of Uganda, commit themselves to a fair, peaceful and credible elections. This debate promotes issue-based discussions among candidates and citizens. The dates of the debates shall be announced as soon as the presidential and parliamentary campaigns begin.

In conclusion, we appeal to everybody to remain hopeful and intercede for our nation. Let us continue adhering to the Ministry of Health guidelines and presidential directives put in place to curb the spread of COVID 19.

COVID is real!

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY!**

Signed this 13<sup>th</sup> **day of August, 2020** for and on behalf of the faith fraternity in Uganda.

