

Archbishop of York says 'Restore Zimbabwe'

Written by Administrator
Friday, 11 July 2008 20:21 -

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Vigil members took a leading role today in a service at Parliament's own parish church, St Margaret's, next to Westminster Abbey, addressed by the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu. The occasion was a service of prayer for the people of Zimbabwe called 'Restore Zimbabwe'. Chipo Chaya and Luka Phiri of the Vigil management team read a lesson in Shona and Ndebele respectively: "If you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2: 19-24). Chipo also conducted the Zimbabwean choir and Vigil Co-ordinator Dumi Tutani led dancing below the altar. Vigil members gave testimony as 'Voices of Zimbabwe': Walter Semwayo, Arnold Kuwewa, Geraldine Takundwa, Choice Matambanadzo, Jeff Sango and others.

The Archbishop said he hoped the international community would wake up to what was happening in Zimbabwe and he assured the congregation "No tyrant lives forever". Dr Sentamu threw his support behind the campaign 'Strangers into Citizens' and said that Zimbabweans in the UK should be allowed to work even if they are not given refugee status because the government accepted they could not be sent home under present conditions. He insisted it was not the thin edge of the wedge but "the right thing for the right people at the right time".

The church was full to capacity for the service and the congregation afterwards gathered in Parliament Square where they heard Kate Hoey, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Zimbabwe, say she hoped they would soon be back in St. Margaret's to celebrate change in Zimbabwe. About a thousand Zimbabweans and supporters then formed a procession to deliver a petition to the British Government calling for the right to work.