To: All Bishops, Clergy, Lay Readers, Christians and People of Uganda;


Christian greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

This letter serves to communicate the message regarding the YEAR OF THE FAMILY 2017.

We recognize that the family was created and ordained by God for a unique and special role in society for the development of God-fearing Nations, namely:-

i. God’s desire and perfect design is to reveal Himself primarily and most substantially through the family institution which is founded on covenant marriage between one man and one woman. That is why He instituted the first family on earth in the Garden of Eden and planned for our Saviour Jesus Christ to be born in a family of Joseph and Mary;

ii. God created marriage and family relationships to be happy, sweet and fulfilling if they are conducted according to his wise and loving guidelines, and that the family provides the safest and most secure place to be and to belong for men, women and children;

iii. The family is the natural place where the next generation is nurtured for the perpetual procreation of mankind so that God’s multigenerational purposes are accomplished;

iv. The family is the basic unit of society from which the Church, communities and nations are built and that the state of any nation is a direct reflection of the state of the family in that nation; and that strong families bring about the best outcomes for men, women and children physically, mentally, socially, spiritually, economically and in all other important aspects of life; and that strong Churches, authentic and sustainable development and national transformation is only possible when a conducive environment exists for families to thrive.
We have reflected on the above and have realized that:

i. The family institution in Uganda today, is under unprecedented attack, is experiencing more and more brokenness, is in a sorry state and we believe that “God’s heart is filled with pain”, about it [Genesis 6:6];

ii. Little is being done to address this state of affairs in the families in Uganda;

iii. This state of affairs regarding the family institution in Uganda is unsustainable and will lead the nation towards national catastrophe in the foreseeable future, if No concrete actions are taken by the Church and the Government.

Therefore, in response to this serious situation, the Church has decided to:

i. The 23rd Provincial Assembly of Church of Uganda declared 2017 the Year of the Family

ii. Play our prophetic role as mandated by God in Ezekiel 3:18 and speak out and warn the citizens and leaders of our nation of the grave danger we in, if we allow the family institution to continue to deteriorate and do nothing about it;

iii. Take advantage of God’s special provision to restore and strengthen family relationships which He gives to nations during the Jubilee Season which comes every 50 years of the life of a nation. During this season, God gives opportunity to everyone to have their family relationships restored by calling on all citizens to, “... every man (and woman) to return to his/her family”, (Leviticus 25:10). Although we are now 54 years old as a nation, we believe that we are just within the closing moments of this unique and special window of opportunity, when we can still claim the blessing associated with the Jubilee, and have our family relationships restored and renewed.

iv. We take it that during this special season, God wants us as a nation to reflect on our family relationships and the foundations upon which they are based. This is with the aim of deliberately placing our families on the firm and unshakable foundation of God’s TRUTH and work towards forgiving and reconciling with each other in our families irrespective of the challenges faced in the past. It is our firm conviction that when we take steps towards family reconciliation and restoration at this time, God’s grace will be poured unto the Nation and He will make possible what is otherwise humanly impossible, as Jesus said that what is impossible with man is possible with God [Matthew 19:26].

v. We believe that with appropriate guidance, counseling and pastoral care, there is no family situation, brokenness or scenario which God’s amazing grace, mercy and forgiveness cannot handle.

It is therefore with this understanding and sensing of God’s divine timing that we took the step as your spiritual leaders to declare 2017 the YEAR OF THE FAMILY, to mark the beginning of a five year deliberate effort to lay a Godly foundation for our families. We are glad to note that in response to our godly advice, the Government through the President on October 8, 2016, declared 2017 to be the YEAR OF THE FAMILY. His Excellency the President further launched the Roadmap for the YEAR OF THE FAMILY on December 9, 2016 during the National Thanksgiving Service at State House, Entebbe under the theme, “STRENGTHEN THE FAMILY; BUILD THE NATION”.

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It is our hope and prayer that starting with 2017 as the YEAR OF THE FAMILY and continuing in subsequent years, the family institution in Uganda will be strengthened and protected so that we can build a new generation of children and youth with Godly values, character suited for family and National roles and responsibilities. This is to be accomplished through teaching and preaching sermons on family based on God’s perspective. The various church activities, projects and programs at all church levels and networking and collaborating with other congregations, denominations, other stakeholders as well as Government, over the next number of years shall also be based on Biblical foundations and in absolute respect of Church of Uganda Core Values.

It is our firm belief that God will honor our obedience as a Nation if we heed His wise and loving counsel during this window of opportunity. This will enable us to have strong, sweet and fulfilling family relationships which will serve as the foundation for our genuine national reconciliation, unity, stability, development and transformation.

While there will be some joint activities involving the Government and other stakeholders where a cost-sharing system may be applied, the Church will carry out its own activities funded through our own means with support from members and well-wishers. For this purpose we call on every Christian to support and actively participate in these activities.

We now recommend the following things and activities to be observed and carried out by all Churches and Christians in the Province of Church of Uganda using our own means: -

1. Families/Christians

   We recommend that:
   
i. Regular family prayers be established in every family and household
   ii. Every family takes the necessary steps to examine and establish a godly foundation for their families
   iii. Every person takes responsibility to reconcile with their family members irrespective of the problems and challenges faced in the past, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:12, 14−15 and 18:15&22.
   iv. Every person takes the responsibility to live in love and peace with other family members as the Scriptures teach in 1 Corinthians 13:4−8.
   v. Husbands and wives should live in faithfulness, unity and harmony as one flesh and in agreement as Scripture teaches in Genesis 2:24 and Amos 3:3.
   vi. Parents should take their God-given responsibility very seriously and should be willing to be equipped and empowered to nurture their children in the fear of the Lord as taught in Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:1-3 Youth be challenged and encouraged to Honor God with their bodies through sexual purity (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6) and those caught up in sexual sin and other vices should be assisted towards repentance and restoration as taught in Galatians 6:1. Youth should also be taught and challenged to set examples for themselves and others in speech, life, in love and purity and to flee from evil desires and should pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace (1 Timothy 4:12 and 2 Timothy 2:22)
2. Congregations/Churches

We recommend that each congregation should:

i. Have a “Family Moment” every Sunday during the service. This should be a moment when something related to the family is said, read, sang, recited or declared as a way of strengthening the family.

ii. Make arrangements to have the Pastor/Clergy/Priest and key church and ministry leaders attend Marriage/Family/Parenting Seminar with their spouses. This can be arranged within the Church or by having several churches come together to have joint seminars.

iii. Prepare to observe and celebrate the International Day of Families on May 15, 2017, together with other churches across denominations and other stakeholders in the community.

iv. Preach at least one sermon a month on the family and if possible the sermon should be in line with the theme of the month. However, more sermons aimed at strengthening the family can be preached as the pastors/clergy parish Priest deem necessary. The sermons should also address issues that threaten or destroy families such as alcohol, drugs, HIV, pornography, negative cultural practices, immorality, deviant sexual practices etc. This should be done in such a manner that brings hope and restoration to individuals and families affected by these vices.

v. Encourage couples that are co-habiting to put things right and get married, and if necessary a mass wedding can be conducted in the course of the year. This should be after appropriate sensitizations, teachings and counseling.

vi. Establish a Church Family Taskforce [CFT] or revitalize/strengthen the Family Ministries e.g. Mothers’ Union, Fathers’ Union and others in the various Church set-ups, which will oversee the families in the Church and will maintain a regular marrieds’ fellowship or equivalent.

vii. Every Church should establish a prayer and intercession ministry that will pray for the families in the Church and in the community.

viii. Incorporate within the youth ministry teachings on the family so that youth can understand the Biblical perspective of the family institution.

ix. Train resource people to assist in the pre-marital, post-marital counseling and general counseling needs of the Church members and the surrounding community.

x. Choose a couple to be Church Coordinators [CC] of the YEAR OF THE FAMILY [YOTF] programs and activities in the church congregation and who will be the link between the Church leadership and coordinators of the YOTF at the next level.

3. Congregations/Churches at Village Level [LC1]

Churches operating at the village level [LC1] Sub Parish or Congregation should work together across denominations to:

i. Spearhead the holding of the Village Family Convocation in conjunction with other local leaders and stakeholders representing spheres such as political,
cultural, business, NGOs, Education etc. The purpose of this is to bring reconciliation, unity and harmony among families in the village

ii. Establish the Village Family Committee [VFC] for Churches in the village and beyond

iii. Work with other stakeholders to establish a Village Family Taskforce for the whole village

iv. Work with other stakeholders to conduct community based marriage / family / parenting seminars at least twice a year where the whole community is invited. The participating Churches should open their doors to become a place of hope and peace for ALL individuals and families in the community irrespective of their sex, ethnicity, race, literacy, and political affiliation, social or religious background.

v. Work with other stakeholders to conduct community based youth conferences at least twice a year where all youth in the community who are in and out of school are invited, irrespective of their sex, ethnicity, race, literacy, political affiliation and social or religious background.

4. Congregations/Churches at District/Diocesan Level

Churches operating at the District/Diocesan level should work together across denominations to:

i. Spearhead the holding of Joint District Family Convocation in conjunction with other district leaders and stakeholders representing spheres such as political, cultural, business, NGOs, Education etc.

ii. Establish the District Family Committee [DFC] for Churches

iii. Work with the other stakeholders in the district to establish the District Family Taskforce for the whole district

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless and prosper your families and may His face shine upon you and restore your hope and fortunes in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Most Rev. Stanley Ntagali
ARCHBISHOP OF CHURCH OF UGANDA.