

H.E. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera

President of Malawi

Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera is the current President of Malawi. He was sworn into office on June 28, 2020 at Malawi Square at Bingu International Convention Centre, Lilongwe.

Before joining frontline politics, Chakwera was President of the Malawi Assemblies of God from 1989 until he resigned on May 14, 2013 to contest in the 2014 General Elections as a presidential candidate for the Malawi Congress party. That presidential election was marred by irregularities forcing the Electoral Commission to petition the High Court for permission to conduct a manual audit of the ballots. Though Chakwera was supportive of the audit, his rival, Arthur Peter Mutharika of Democratic Progressive Party took an injunction to stop it forcing the Commission to announce the results. Mutharika was declared winner by 8.6 percent margin. Following the declaration, Chakwera announced that he would not challenge the results to give Mutharika a chance to prove himself in the highest office. In the meantime, Chakwera won a parliamentary seat and became the Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly.

He served as Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly until February 2019 when he submitted his nomination papers to the Electoral Commission for the second time to run for presidential election in the May 21, 2019 elections. The elections were highly contested and marred by irregularities. The Commission used widespread correction fluid on results sheets. Despite complaints and accusations about the irregularities, the Commission declared Mutharika winner by a margin of 3.1 percent. However, on the day that Mutharika was inaugurated for a second term, Chakwera announced his decision to challenge the election result.

He and State Vice President Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima filed a petition to the Constitutional Court demanding a fresh presidential election. After a six-month hearing, the five-judge panel of the court unanimously nullified the 2019 presidential election on account of “massive, serious, and widespread irregularities” that violated multiple provisions of the Constitution and laws governing elections.

The court ordered that a fresh poll be held within 150 days of the ruling, but President Mutharika appealed the judgment to the Supreme Court, which unanimously upheld the decision of the lower court. At the end of the fresh the election which took place on June 23, 2020, under the oversight of a newly constituted Electoral Commission, Chakwera won with 58.57 percent of the vote. Chakwera was born on the rural outskirts of Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi on April 5, 1955 to Earnest Person Chakwera and Mallen Mwale, who were subsistence farmers.

Their home was typical rural, without electricity or running water or privileges of any kind. Their poor surroundings exposed the children to sickness so regularly that two of Chakwera’s brothers born before him died in infancy. His father named him Lazarus to express his faith that he would defy the odds and live long as the Bible character who was raised from the dead. He has a sister and a brother. Chakwera is married to Monica and together they have four children and 12 grandchildren.

In 1977, the year they were married, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Philosophy) Degree from the University of Malawi. He got his honours degree from the University of the North, Sovenga, South Africa. In 1991, he got his masters from the University of South Africa. The Trinity International

University in Deerfield, Illinois, USA awarded him a doctorate in 2000. The Pan Africa Theological Seminary awarded him Professorship in 2005. He has served in a number of roles of executive leadership both in Malawi and internationally: He was Chairman of the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) 1997-2014; Board Chairman for All Nations Theological Seminary 2008-2013; Board Member of the Global University, Springfield, Missouri, USA, 1999 – 2005.

He was also Board Chairman of the Pan Africa Theological Seminary (PATHS) 2004 – 2014; Chairman of Assoc. of Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA) - 2011-2014; President of Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (2004-2013); Secretary of World Assemblies of God Fellowship (2005-2017); co-chair of the Facilitation Team created to resolve the Budget and Section 65 Parliamentary impasse between Cabinet and Opposition in 2008; Chairman of Malawi's Petroleum Control Commission and the National Council for Sports. President Chakwera has promised to govern by a set of five principles that he calls The Chakwera SUPER HI-5, which highlight the five policy focus areas that will be high on his gubernatorial agenda: Servant Leadership; Uniting Malawi; Prospering Together; Ending Corruption; Rule of Law. These priorities may be summed up as follows:

- Servant Leadership: A promise to restructure the Presidency and the Civil Service both practically and constitutionally to be defined by quality service and results, not power and privilege.
- Uniting Malawi: A promise to unify Malawians by meeting the Opposition quarterly, facilitating the celebration of all tribes, and depoliticizing traditional chieftaincies.
- Prospering Together: A promise to build infrastructure in all regions of Malawi, to create one million jobs for youth within a year, increase the minimum wage, waive income tax for everyone earning less than K100,000, provide capital to one million women to start their own businesses, reduce the cost of fertilizer to K4,495 and to increase food production
- Ending Corruption: A promise to create special courts to deal with corruption, establish an anti-corruption office in each government department, toughen anti-corruption laws, and empower the Anti-Corruption Bureau with resources.
- Rule of Law: A promise to report to Parliament for questioning as required by law, a promise to resource law-enforcement agencies to enforce the law, and a promise to respect the judgments of the courts. President Chakwera has challenged Malawians that fulfilling these promises will be the best way of "Building A New Malawi Enjoyed by All" (Kumanga Malawi Watsopano Okomela Tonse), a phrase he has used extensively as his rallying campaign slogan, from whose last word was derived the name "Tonse Alliance", the nine-party coalition he led to victory in the 2020 Fresh Presidential Election to become the sixth President of the Republic of Malawi.