

DEMOCRACY AND THE ELECTIONS

A PASTORAL LETTER

FROM

CHURCH LEADERS OF KWAZULU-NATAL

This year marks the 20th anniversary of that great day when many South Africans of all races stood in long lines filled with hope to cast their vote for the first time in their lives. This year presents the 5th opportunity for all of us to cast our votes in a “new” South Africa.

As we reflect on this, we affirm that the country has remained peaceful, and is relatively stable. The economy is still one of the strongest on the continent, and South Africa has played a leadership role on the continent. We acknowledge that there is, to a large degree, political freedom of expression and the ability to make choices at the ballot box. We acknowledge that the goal of political freedom has been attained. We must also, however, recognise that political freedom was not followed by economic freedom, nor by increased gender and environmental justice. The poverty gap has increased, the provision of quality housing remains woefully inadequate, service delivery is non-existent in many areas, and education and health are two major areas of concern. It is deeply distressing that too often, the pleas of the communities are ignored until they resort to protest action, which is met by violence, and then the problems are addressed and sometimes resolved.

The churches need to accept some responsibility for not consistently continuing the pursuit of the important Kin'dom value of justice – also as it manifests in economic, gender and environmental justice.

The greatest concern, when elections loom, is the potential for the resurgence of the political violence, which has plagued our province in previous elections. It is our sincere prayer that 20 years has brought sufficient political maturity to the people of this province whereby we are able to address our political differences with the ballot, and not with bullets or other weapons. We implore all voters in this province to exercise tolerance and understanding of others as they make their choice.

We look forward to peaceful elections, which will provide a government with a servant heart for the people, and for a positive future for this land.

ENDORSED BY:

Bishop Rubin Phillip, *Anglican Bishop of Natal (KZN) & Dean of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa*

Bishop Mike Vorster, *Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Natal Coastal District & Chairperson KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council*

Bishop Sandy Dickie, *Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Natal West District*

Bishop PP Buthelezi, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, South Eastern Diocese*

Bishop Mlungisi Dlungwane, *Roman Catholic Diocese of Marriannhill*

Bishop Dino Gabriel, *Anglican Diocese of Zululand & Chairperson KwaZulu Regional Christian Council*

Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe, *Anglican Suffragan Bishop of Natal-South Episcopal Area*

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM, *Archdiocese of Durban & KwaZulu-Natal Inter-Religious Council*

Revd Ian Booth, *Moderator, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa & Chairperson Diakonia Council of Churches*

Revd Derek Potgieter, *Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa Presbytery of Thekwini*

Revd Abednego Mngambi, *Mpuma District Superintendent, United Methodist Church*

Revd Zandile Myeni, *Ethiopian Episcopal Church*

Ms Liz Palmer, *The Religious Society of Friends, KwaZulu-Natal*

Major Solomon Mahlangu, *Salvation Army Divisional Commander, Mid KwaZulu-Natal Division*

Issued 21 February 2014

Published by KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders Group

Prepared by Diakonia Council of Churches