



South African Council of Churches



A message of hope: A letter to be read out in all Christian congregations in South Africa “for such a time as this” (December 2017)

Dear people of faith

We are now in the season that prepares for the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ. We are preparing for the celebration of God pitching God’s tent amongst us, in the form of the birth of a vulnerable baby. The birth of this child brought about immense suspicion from those who were insecure about their power, but it was and remains good news to those who have little hope. Let us pray the prayer “**Maranatha**” (**Come, O Lord**) at this time, so that we may all experience this new birth with great joy and expectation, and that our society may also experience a new rebirth into fresh hope.

Whilst we are mindful that there are a number of political parties that have an influence in the life of our nation, the African National Congress enjoys majority support for now and is in the majority in Parliament. What it therefore does or fails to do has an impact on the life of the nation. It is in this regard that we are mindful that in a few days’ time, the ANC will gather for its elective conference and to make policy decisions. Let us keep them in our prayers today and for the next few days, that factional interests will not overwhelm this Conference, but that the “common good” will find its way to the list of priorities at this Conference. We further pray that they may be able to find ways to resolve some of their differences and discover the path of unity around positive values.

For people of faith, the question is never about political parties or factions, but always about what is best for the common good. What is best for the poorest of the poor? What is best to establish justice, peace and reconciliation? These are timeless questions, which must be asked in concrete situations. **Our hope is not in political parties, but in God.** In him we live and move and have our being. God’s creativity and love is and has always been immense. We can see its immensity all around us.

The worship of this God of life is ongoing, for this is a sign of our appreciation of what God continues to accomplish in our society, often against all odds. We can see **God's unity in diversity** not only amongst human beings, but especially in nature. At times such as these, we need to be reminded of this and hold onto one another in faith, hope and love.

As South Africans, we have been through worse times and God has always been good to us.

Political leaders will come and go. If they serve the people, they are good. If they serve only themselves and their families and friends, they are the opposite of what God has intended for them. Let us pray that whoever are elected, will understand this and implement policies that accord with it. We need humble, wise and servant-leaders. We need leaders of integrity, whose leadership will help us truly to realize the post-apartheid promise of South Africa: a just, reconciled, peaceful, equitable and sustainable South Africa - free of racism, tribalism, xenophobia, and gender prejudices; free of corruption and deprivation; where every child born is free to grow to its God-given potential: **The South Africa We Pray For!** We need leaders who can live the words of our constitution "Unity in diversity".

The church cares for all the people of South Africa, whether they are Christian or not. We do so because God cares for all the people of South Africa, and especially for those who are poor and marginalised. Leaders need to ensure that the education system, the economic system, the health system, the justice system, the social security and other systems work primarily for the benefit of the poorest families. Corruption, maladministration and lack of accountability from within both the private and public sectors detracts from us dealing decisively with poverty and inequality. The evidence emerging about the capture of our state institutions as well as corrupt business practices is of particular concern to us. We will continue to engage on these matters with those in government and business, and strengthen civil society actors who advocate for accountability, sustainability and justice.

Our hope and help is ultimately in the Name of God and that vulnerable child, Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Our hope and help is in the Name of God's Holy Spirit who breathes a breath of fresh air upon us and gives us a peace that passes all understanding. Our hope and help is in the God who creates and constantly recreates all that is good.

This is our hope and this is also our faith, as we pray: **God bless South Africa. Guard all her children. Guide all her leaders. And give us your peace. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.**

From:

Bishop Zipho Siwa (on behalf of the South African Council of Churches - SACC)

Rev Moss Nthla (on behalf of The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa - TEASA)

Tel: 082 809 8533 (for enquiries)

Rev Edwin Arrison (on behalf of the South African Christian Leaders Initiative – SACLI)
