

Churches call all people to vote on May 8 2019

The time has once again come for all people of God in the Republic of South Africa to go to the polls to vote for the Party of their choice to govern this beautiful country.

As the Church of God continues to uphold this 25-year democratic rule and freedom through support and prayers, we call on all our people to go and vote on May 8 2019. Twenty-five years has been a great period we have been given by God, yet we witnessed fundamental shortcomings purely because of mediocrity, arrogance, inconsiderate greed and corruption from some political leaders. If our peaceful country had not witnessed so much disregard of human dignity as a result of poor service delivery in some areas, more could have been achieved. The Church wishes to restate that it is not oblivious of extreme honour and dedication from some of our political leaders who selflessly continued to make us proud even at the point of risking their lives as they lead. Those good leaders are the reason we continue to praise and thank God.

Voting is not just exercising a democratic human right, but God commands people to take active role in political discourse through prayer and action. We actually do not show we care for this country by only harping on the faults of those elected without our participation. Abdicated our prayerful participation in the election itself because the result of that election, albeit by default, lives with us as we witnessed in the meaningless coalitions we have had. Your vote is a way of encouraging and assisting in the growth and development of our beautiful country. Evil prevail when good people sit, watch things happen and do nothing.

Everyone's vote is acting justly, loving mercy and humbly restoration of the soul of the people in the governance of the country. This beautiful country must be restored through vote from unabated crime, ambivalent laws passed at our watch by people who seem to not care about the morale of this country. The witnessing of prevailing lawlessness in this country has added an impression that the laws favour perpetrators than victims. The practice of justice flies on our faces when we see the country continues to be drowned into flood of unbelievable forms of abuse, violence poverty and youth unemployment while parliamentarians who should intervene by strengthening the legal system watch things happen. It is true we have been disappointed, and the lawlessness in this country is to a greater extent as a result of the methodology of governance. Let us vote so as to hold to account those who rule us.

Furthermore, a call to vote is also premised on the truth that deep down in the very grain of our emotional and spiritual being resonates ethical leadership that cares for people. We pray for the leadership that will honestly serve people in a humbly way that seeks to restore human values and exercised as a praise to God. It is our prayer that even the vibrant political rhetoric will always be done in a manner that builds the unity and development of this country and communities, rather than divide and destroy on racial, traditional and ethnic ground. Leaders must always bear in mind that they are respectable sources of unity, moral fibre and power of social cohesion for generations to come. Failure to exercise that mandate invokes civil disobedience which the Christians dare not resist.

To this end we as a Church of God, pray for the country to seize this unique opportunity to vote once again in this historic election. It is the right time to act justly and love mercy for generations to come.

May 8 2019 is a time of reckoning, where we have to go to polls come rain or shine. We have now passed questioning whether Christians should participate in political dispensation. Aristotle in defining the word politics as *polis* shows it as a commitment to good and virtuous life by all citizenry. Similarly, one of the great African fathers of the Church, St Augustine of Hippo once said that we can identify the character of people by determining what they love. Our vote will be the test of our character in loving this country. Jesus Himself taught participation in socio- economic and political life by instructing his believers to *“render to Caesar that which belongs to him...”*. And he further said *“where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* There you are, on May 8, let us all prayerfully rise up and go to vote, remembering the great words from our iconic father Dr Nelson Mandela on the 25 February 1990, *“since my release, I have become more convinced than ever that the real makers of history are the ordinary men and women of our country. Their participation in every decision about the future is the only guarantee of true democracy and freedom.”* Indeed, such will be our important collective and historic step of the mission of rebuilding this country.

Lord God of justice help us we pray!

Bishop Jacob Freemantle

Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Grahamstown Synod