

We need people who can stop decline and steady the ship

By Alain Walljee: Bay Christian Church

The Constitutional Court recently upheld our constitutional democracy when it dismissed the IEC's application to postpone the upcoming local government elections, thus avoiding the complications that such a postponement would have had on our nation.

Scientists have identified a phenomenon called *entropy* that basically means that *anything left unattended will naturally tend toward disorder and chaos*. In South Africa we have a history not just of entropy, but of deliberate attempts to create chaos.

Take colonisation, for example, where foreigners came to these shores and displaced its original inhabitants. Take the racial wars between Africans, The Boers and the English. Or the Union government that excluded the Brown, Black and Indian masses of our people. Then came apartheid and the subsequent resistance to oppression. And we are still counting the cost of that chaos, literally generations later.

And while we have perfected the art, as most of us do daily in our everyday lives, of looking good on the outside while we suffer, struggle or rot on the inside, the time has come that our nation's collective inner weakness has begun to show on the outside.

The symptoms of our national state of disrepair are visible in our crime stats, social ills and the malignant tumour of racial tension brewing just below the surface of our makeshift okayness with the world.

Throw into the mix a global pandemic and global lockdown responses that put our collective and individual convictions and many now-proven false confidences to the test, and we get a resultant reality that entropy is inadequate to describe.

And, mind you, this pandemic comes at a time when confidence in government on all levels is low and corruption in all sectors is threatening to rob us entirely of future hope or fortunes.

In the context of this chaos of undercurrents our nation and this metro face, the apex court's recent insistence on strict constitutional adherence is a welcome ray of light – it is a steadying of the ship, as it were.

And this is exactly what South Africa and the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro needs: we need brave people and courageous individuals who will take a stand for what is right even when it is not fashionable to do so.

And as we call on God in this season of uncertainty and chaos, may I remind you that God taught us to measure our faith in the unseen by our actions in what we can see.

When John wrote that a man cannot love God whom he has not seen if he hates his brother whom he can see, he set a true standard for measuring our relationship with the divine by our actions in our physical world.

By the same token, we understand God's work in the world of people by the things which He had already put in place among us.

Like a real *boss* there are things God will only do through the people and things to whom He has delegated that particular responsibility or authority.

Cry as you might to the owner(s) of a global chain of stores, any real change in that organisation will only happen at the hands of the people on different levels that the owner(s) have tasked with running their business.

When you want to fix child abuse, you can pray about it, but until you meaningfully engage parents and would-be parents, you may end up thinking that your prayers are falling on deaf ears.

But we must understand that when we pray over social issues, God moves on people whom He had called to that space, or on systems and people who have the secular responsibility in that space.

It is this context that gives true meaning to the Biblical imperative that *the powers that be are ordained of God*. While God may not have chosen the incumbents and their actions, He does endorse the institution, provided that it is intended for the wellbeing and prosperity of people.

The question of consequence, therefore, is not: *Where is God in all this chaos?* But rather, *Where are the people that can stop the decline and steady the ship?*

I believe that poverty has its masters who live to ensure its subsistence, crime has its enablers – even in government, even in the home.

Racial tension has its authors.

Fatherless children has its culprits.

There are people whose offices have addresses and whose identities are known who must account for the chaos.

We can make the decline stop.

There are many social ills to address at this point, but I will choose one.

Heartlines is a values-based social and behaviour change organisation and they have conducted extensive research that showed that 65% of children in South Africa grow up without a present, positive male figure in their lives.

The research also showed that this alarming reality poses the following significant risks to our children nationwide: perpetrating and becoming victims of violence (both as children and adults), substance abuse, teen pregnancy, poor academic achievement and mental health problems and delinquency.

We need brave people who can help stop the rot.

Check out www.heartlines.org.za today and see how you can help steady the ship and become the hero your child, your family, your community and this nation needs.