

## **Making a difference in corrupt world**

Reading the Herald on any given day one would come to the conclusion that corruption has become a global disease. No country, no business, no community organisation, and no political party seems to be immune from the disease.

We can all do something to stop the spread. Let me remind regular readers of this column that there is a practical South African initiative in which we as the general public can be involved. My call was for all of us to take a personal stand against corruption and commit ourselves and the institutions that we control through being signatories to the Unashamedly Ethical pledge. The idea behind printing the commitment and displaying it and the logo in prominent places in our homes and places of work is to remind ourselves of what it means to have good values, ethics and live a clean and productive life.

Taking a stand for good generally has a positive effect on our physical well-being, as does positive news. This is demonstrated by the popularity of the #ImStaying posts that have taken Facebook by storm. Philippians 4:8 puts it this way; "Summing it up friends, I'd say you will do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise not to curse....."

In my first article, I quoted Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Sir Jonathan Sacks. He recommended that, in order to remoralise and renew itself, a society needs to concentrate on developing groups dedicated to social, political and educational reform. This helped transform England and America in the 1820s

And it is happening in Nelson Mandela Bay. On 30 November 2017, a unique event took place at the South End Museum. It was facilitated by the Ikhala Trust and the Nelson Mandela Bay Church Leaders Network, represented by TCN.

The invitation stated the following: "Conversations about poverty and unemployment usually conjure up images of need, lack, deficits, problems, challenges, scarcity and feeling overwhelmed as the challenges seem insurmountable. However, turning our attention to what is POSSIBLE and DO-ABLE as individuals without the noose around our necks of sectors we represent – can create magic. "Many citizens in Nelson Mandela Bay do many works of charity on a daily basis that often goes unnoticed – however our activities are not co-ordinated and this means that there are communities in the Bay that go completely unnoticed despite facing the same challenges as the ones that are supported by many."

One of the far-reaching decisions taken at this event was the commitment to build a database of NGOs and other faith-based charities and social business enterprises in order to promote cooperation and limit the potential for communities in NMB to go unnoticed. Work on this database is well advanced. With the able assistance of geographic information system (GIS) specialists, we will have a spatial view, at the touch of a button, of who is doing what in the metro to help tackle the three evils of poverty, inequality and unemployment. This will help NGOs and volunteers to coordinate activities and prevent duplication or over-servicing of one area at the expense of others. With this tool at our fingertips, we all will be better informed of the good that is happening in NMB and be in a better position to make ourselves available to serve in some capacity, with a charity which can best utilise our own gifts and resources.

In addition, the organised church in the city has hosted network events where NGOs can gather to discuss mutually beneficial initiatives. The next networking event will be taking place this Wednesday, 30 October, and will be hosted at Joy to the Nations in Villiers Road, Walmer.

At a personal or business level, if you want to make a difference now, log onto Just1hr on the [www.tcn.org.za](http://www.tcn.org.za) website. JUST1HR is a vehicle to drive transformation by initiating a shift from institutions and corporations to personal involvement, promoting a spirit of volunteerism in the metro. It is a call to the people of our metro to be part of the Nehemiah Vision by giving JUST1HR a month.

In my personal opinion, the bar is purposely set low so as to avoid the usual excuse, of “I do not have the time”. We all have a talent or resource that we can offer in your street, neighbourhood or municipal ward.

The church is also speaking up for all residents of the metro. At a Nelson Mandela Bay Church Leaders Network Meeting on 10 October, the attendees were asked to prepare their thoughts on the way forward for an open discussion on “Our City is Broken - what do you suggest we do about it?”

One of the decisions taken at this meeting culminated in an open letter addressed to President Cyril Ramaphosa and Mr Mmusi Maimane regarding concern about the falling apart of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipal Council. This letter was published on page 4 of this newspaper on 11 October 2019. The offices of both the president and Mr Maimane acknowledged receipt of the letter.

People of NMB, we cannot leave it to the public or private sectors. We need to do it ourselves in communities, congregations, groups of every shape and size. We need to understand that only a society held together by a strong moral bond has any chance of succeeding in the long run. The Nehemiah Route, a 200km trail through our metro, to be launched on the 4 November, will be an ideal way for the concerned citizens of NMB to “inspect the walls” (Wards) of our city, just as Nehemiah did for Jerusalem all those years ago. (Nehemiah 2:11-18)

Mike Smith, Marketplace Minister.