

## **WE NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHO WE ARE AS A COUNTRY**

The Nelson Mandela Bay Church Leader Network condemns the blatant criminality, looting, financial sabotage, and incitement of violence in parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, which threatens to spill over to other parts of our country.

The South African democracy is at a crossroads.

The way we choose to go forward will determine our future, be it one of destruction and suffering or flourishing.

We need to be clear about who we are and what kind of society we want to build, and what we reject.

We have a Biblical, prophetic witness and message to deliver. Firstly, we witness against:

- The thieves, looters, thugs, and arsonists. We say: stop your criminal activities. You are sabotaging the economy robbing people of jobs and livelihoods and will tear us down into the abyss of lawlessness. You are in fact stealing from the most vulnerable who will languish in the aftermath of your destruction. Please stop.
- The instigators and organisers of violence. We say: you use the very real issues of hunger, poverty, unemployment, and poor service delivery to foment chaos for your own gain. You try to light the wildfire which will uncontrollably destroy us all. Please stop.
- Those who foment lawlessness through race, ethnicity, or tribalism. We say: you sow division and set citizens against one another. You endeavour to consolidate your own power by but destroy the ability of South Africans to work together and to build a better future for all. Please stop.
- Those who spread fake news and distort the truth. False narratives about the judicial system, court verdict, political leaders, issues concerning Covid-19 and vaccination are being spread. You construct a false rationale for thuggery and destruction. Please stop.
- Corrupt politicians who do not serve, but seek to enrich themselves and their families, often in cahoots with equally corrupt businesspeople, robbing the public of necessary services and opportunity. Please stop.

We call on every South African to refrain from what is corrupt, destructive, violent, false, and merely self-serving.

We call on the South African police and the military to stand firm against the destruction we are witnessing in our land. Please be loyal only to justice, fairness, the common good and the protection of the public. We support our security personnel.

We commend the justices and magistrates who measure justice out without fear or favour, but in fairness and in a principled way.

We thank health care workers who diligently care for our sick, especially in this dire pandemic. We are grateful for the programme of immunization.

The current events should not be allowed to harm this rollout.

We call on all South Africans to remain calm and collected. Be circumspect in the actions you take to protect your loved ones and your property.

Our prophetic voice also points to God's preferred future for us.

God intends a better future for us all.

The Nelson Mandela Bay Church Leader Network advocates a caring, open society with opportunity, employment, and security for all. For this reason, we call on all leaders in all tiers of government to work together with civic society, business, and education to create a better life for all.

The current crisis is symptomatic of the deep inequality, poverty, and hopelessness in our society. We are sitting on a timebomb. Our problems will not go away without a concerted effort to address inequality, poverty, and growth in the economy to promote employment.

In addition to short-term actions to solve the current crisis, our problems.

As the collective church we are taking practical steps to improve our plight:

- Our Prayer Network - which reaches right around the Bay - prays diligently for the volatile situation in the country and for God to protect the Bay and flourish her people
- We are feeding literally thousands of economically marginalised families in our metro. Our Against Hunger programme prevents starvation
- We are committed to plant vegetable gardens and to teach people to grow their own nutritious food
- We are present in schools to support educators and learners
- We are developing training to enable voters to use their votes wisely in the upcoming local elections and to resist the nomination of corrupt candidates by political parties
- Our diverse leadership (denominations, networks, race, culture, gender, gifting) witness to the society we are building and set an example for others to follow.

We ask congregations to link communities together. Create networks which can communicate and advocate through digital platforms to protect themselves, disseminate information, mobilise against criminality, and keep government structures accountable.

Our people carry a heavy burden.

As spiritual shepherds our immediate concern is for the people who are shaken, numbed, shocked and feeling hopeless by what they are witnessing.

We are committed to a ministry of hope. We will prevail because God our Father cares for us, Jesus Christ our Lord reigns over us, and God the Holy Spirit empower us to seek the Kingdom of God.

**Bishop Jacob Freemantle: Methodist Church of SA (Grahamstown Synod)**

**Apostle Neville Goldman: Ebenezer International**

**Dominee Danie Mouton: Director Synod Eastern Cape DRC**