

## Help catalyse and empower the leader within each of us

“Utterly bizarre” is how a judge of the high court at Gqeberha, described a case brought to him by the Nelson Mandela Bay metro municipality.

Judge Glenn Goosen, who heard the case on 3 March this year, was told that the municipality had two city managers.

Each was appointed at a different council meeting, by feuding groupings of city councillors — and both claimed to be legitimate. Reported by reputable news source, including the Herald, this comment was amongst many statements made by disparate civil society organisations in the recent past.

To quote a few:

“The state of dysfunctionality in Nelson Mandela Bay casts a dark shadow over the citizens of our beloved metro. Effective administration and service delivery are in a breathtaking downward spiral.”

“The state of dysfunctionality in Nelson Mandela Bay has reignited the Nelson Mandela Bay Civil Society Coalition to take action, as political instability has rendered the Metro incapable of delivering basic services to communities and businesses.”

And finally: “The state of dysfunctionality in Nelson Mandela Bay has reignited the Nelson Mandela Bay Civil Society Coalition to take action, as political instability has rendered the Metro incapable of delivering basic services to communities and businesses”.

What is remarkable about the last statement is that it was penned in July 2013, all of nine years ago. One is reminded of the often quoted “for evil men to thrive it takes good men to do nothing”.

Have we indeed been guilty of doing nothing?

“I would however ask just one question for each of us. What have you as an individual or Organisation done today to shift the needle? Even if it only moves a fraction.”

So said Harry Loubser, managing director of Transparency International, in a recent newsletter relating to their *Corruption Perception Index* released earlier this year, but would be equally applicable to the situation we find ourselves in currently.

On Monday 27 June, Bishop Jacob Freemantle said in this column “One of the prophetic calls on the Church in community is synergising the social compact so that the order of life is meaningfully lived. “When members of society have implicit agreement on values that build communities for the benefit of society, when they talk and work together, and at times sacrifice their status or egos, the combined creativity and skills produce results that benefit generations, often beyond our imagination.

“Prophet Isaiah 58 enjoins us all as a Church, *‘Is it not this kind of fasting I have chosen to loosen chains of injustice, to untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free?’*”

“This, in a nutshell, speaks to the synergy of all of us sharing our resources for the benefit of the healthy society.”

In that article he essentially challenges the church in the metro with specific goals.

The NMB Business Chamber, in similar fashion, has orchestrated a campaign amongst its members to adopt a sub-station, adopt a school and most recently, adopt a leak.

Assuredly, under the able leadership of their President and CEO, more will follow.

What prevents us as individuals from taking up the challenge?

There are those, of course who play the blame game and insist that because they pay their rates, it is the municipality which must get its act together.

Of course, that is right, but is it enough?

There are those of us, especially in my age bracket who feel so guilty about our past privilege, that they become paralysed.

In many instances, they – like me – are still privileged, having the benefit of a possibly superior education system.

Mark Lawler, director and administration manager of Umbomi Obutsha, an NGO working in impoverished areas of our city, addressing a group of Christian men at a recent breakfast said, “spend less time feeling guilty about the past, rather take responsibility for the future”.

The story of Esther is well known to churching people who will remember her role in influencing the all-powerful Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes 1, King of Persia and the famous quote from the book bearing her name, chapter 4;14, when her Uncle, Mordicai, says to her “.....yet who knows whether you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?”

Despite significant personal risk, she accepts the challenge to be part of a collaboration to save her people.

God is always working amongst sin and broken systems of this world.

We might sometimes feel overwhelmed by the abuse of power and authority surrounding us. But we can have total confidence that even when it seems that God is absent, He is always at work behind the scenes. Trusting in that, how might God be wanting you to influence change for such a time as this?

Let me end with the words of Mark Heywood in an article dated 21 June, titled “Give me hope Mzansi”.

“We hope that in the coming months a group of people in South Africa will stand up and point out a path to a new politics.

“This group needs to be made up of people across generations, races and genders. It needs to represent what is good in our society, not what is bad.

“Their job is not to be our leaders but to help catalyse and empower the leaders within each of us.”

**Mike Smith, Workplace Minister**