



<p>THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE 2012 CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS</p>

28 December 2011

<p>A WORD TO THE ANC, IN THESE TIMES</p>

As we continue to celebrate the coming of the Word into the world (John 1: 1) and God made human, we, fellow South Africans and Christian theologians, now wish to pass these words on to the African National Congress, as it prepares to celebrate its centenary during 2012...

We do so in a spirit of appreciation and gratitude for you and in a spirit of true friendship, where we can both congratulate you and raise some concerns as friends, and pray that these celebrations will be appropriate and not lavish, especially given the levels of poverty and inequality in our country.

We do so, knowing that many members of the ANC are also part of the Christian community, and this document is therefore written for our collective reflection.

We also do so, knowing that many Christian leaders were involved in the formation and nurturing of the ANC over the years, and we therefore continue to feel a sense of responsibility for its existence and what it does. In 1912, the founders of the African National Congress dreamed of a different future for all the people of South Africa, where there would be no more coloniser and colonised, but where we would all be one: One people, one nation, one country!

They dreamed that the injustice that was being meted out to black South Africans by the colonisers would come to an end. We thank God that the colonial and apartheid systems have come to an end and a great effort has been made to better the lives of all South Africans, especially the poor.

Although there has been much progress in this regard, certain tensions and contradictions continue to militate against us fully achieving this dream. The effect of

the 1913 Land Act, is largely still with us; the economic disparities are stuck with us; deep levels of poverty are staring at us.

In this year, we once again dream of a future of being one, united in our diversity. This unity needs to be based on justice, peace and righteousness. Let us use this year to once again dream this dream together...

A WORD OF CONGRATULATIONS

We therefore congratulate the African National Congress, the oldest liberation movement on the African continent, as it celebrates this important milestone in its history. With all the challenges it has faced over the years of its existence, it could have imploded but it has remained remarkably resilient, and for that we congratulate you. We congratulate you for your pivotal role in the liberation of our country alongside that of the other liberation movements.

We congratulate you for the vision and foresight you have displayed to change as the conditions on the ground changed, and we hope that you never lose the original dream that was dreamt and the vision of a united, non-racial, non-sexist, just and democratic South Africa.

A WORD OF APPRECIATION

We appreciate the fact that the ANC was not initially formed to oppose the system of apartheid or even to govern South Africa, but to oppose the oppression of the black majority under colonial rule in the early 1900s in South Africa.

We appreciate that for almost 80 years of its existence, the ANC was not the party that governed South Africa, and that the ANC is the first governing party in South Africa that has attempted to take the needs of the majority of South Africa's citizens into account through for example the provision of housing, a national health system, etc. As long as the needs of the majority of the country's citizens remain the focus of the work of the ANC, we will express this kind of appreciation but where only a minority of the citizen's needs or wants become paramount, we will express our disapproval.

We appreciate the fact that 17 years is not enough to reverse the legacies of almost 350 years of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. We are convinced that more could have

been done, but we appreciate that much has been done to begin to reverse the historical legacies of this country.

We also appreciate that the ANC is the only party which has consistently insisted on non-racialism and unity in South Africa for most of its existence. Both of these are constantly under threat, from within the ANC and from without, and we would ask that you hold on to these values and renew your commitment to these values not only in words, but in practical action, so that our children and grandchildren can see this and follow this example.

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

We therefore thank God for the African National Congress and its long history of resistance to colonialism and apartheid, and its 17 years as the governing party with a specific focus on the historically poor majority of the people of South Africa.

We thank God for the freedom that could be achieved by the people of South Africa and pledge that we will do all that is possible to maintain and preserve this freedom.

We thank God that millions of South Africans now have housing and that the most destitute and vulnerable have a small monthly income.

We thank God for continued initiatives to broaden and deepen the quantity and quality of health care to all South Africans.

We thank God that all South Africans have the freedom to express dissent and to organise against anything they might feel do not represent democratic values.

A WORD OF CONFESSION

We want to confess that, in these last 100 years, the Christian Church has been divided on the question of colonialism and apartheid. It would be dishonest of us to say that the whole Church opposed colonialism and apartheid, while in fact only a part of the Church did that. A substantial part of the church in South Africa has therefore not always been with you and other liberation movements in the struggle, but some of us have been part of these struggles, and the Kairos document and the World Council of Churches Lusaka Statement of 1987 were the most emphatic expressions of that solidarity and unity with the oppressed people of South Africa.

We want to confess that the church has often also remained a spectator as the settlement of 1994, in its comprehensive sense, was unravelling. Most of the churches have failed to deal with racism and sexism within their structures and practice, including dealing with the disparities between blacks and whites within the churches.

We also want to confess that many Christians and churches have not internalised the new culture of democracy and the values of our new democracy. For many, the Christian message became a tool for either maintaining a silence about or defending the indefensible of the past as a way to pursue narrow political interests in the present.

A WORD ABOUT THE CHURCH IN THE ROAD TO 1912

The Christian community has of course played a significant role in the liberation of our country and also in the ANC, and it is only apt to remind ourselves of the role that Christians have played. It is in this respect that we want to reaffirm and reassert the role of Christians in the past, present and future of our country.

There are at least two significant ways in which the Christian church helped in preparing for and nurturing the environment for the birth of the ANC in 1912 – education and the emergence of dissenting voices to the misapplication of the Christian gospel to promote or condone and justify black dehumanisation.

The first is the church mission school education that helped to discipline the African intellectual prowess to produce the likes of John Tengo Jabavu, John Langalibalele Dube and his successor as ANC President, Sefako Makgatho and many, many others. Historic schools like Lovedale (1841) and Healdtown (1845) in the Eastern Cape; Adams Mission (1847), Inanda (1869) and St Francis (1883) in KwaZulu-Natal; Zonnebloem (1858) in the Western Cape; Tiger Kloof in the Northern Cape; Lemana (1875) in Limpopo, amongst others, have shaped and formed many of our leaders.

These schools provided a discipline that was to be important in the intellectualised struggle of the 20th century.

The other contribution of the church in this critical preparatory phase stems from the essential message of the Christian gospel that all people are created in the image of God, and of the love imperative in the mutuality of human living.

The second contribution of the church therefore, was in the recognition by black Christians in the 19th Century of the dissonance between the Word and the social practice of the official church, whose significance is referenced further below.

The mention of these Christian witnesses in the struggle for justice and democracy is, in part, a recognition of the role of and particular engagement by the Christian Church which has been abiding from before and in a way foundational to the formation of the ANC in 1912. After the completion of the military, economic, religious and political conquest of South Africa by the colonial powers, the struggle shifted to the sphere of the religious intellectuals and strategists. Rev Tiyo Soga, the very first African to be ordained minister, wrote in 1861:

“The Kaffirs have no legal titles to their locations...I see plainly that unless the rising generation is trained to some of the useful arts, nothing else will raise our people, and they must be grooms, drivers of wagons, hewers of wood, or general servants. But let our youths be taught trades, to earn money, and they will increase it, and purchase the land. When a people are not land-proprietors, they are of no consequence in this country...our boys must be taught trades if we are to continue as a people”.

This he said over 40 years before the 1911 Hertzog Bills that became the 1913 Land Act, limiting Africans to 7% of South Africa’s land mass. It is no wonder that, as Dr Mathole Motshekga writes, “When the resolution to form the SANNAC was adopted, the congress burst into the song ‘God fulfil your promise’ – singing Tiyo Soga’s hymn, “Lizalis’idinga Lakho”. And indeed the very hymn remained to inspire the hope of Oliver Tambo in the face of the street killings of youths in 1976 as he adopted the verse that prays “Behold our land – Bona izwe lakowethu!”

Soga’s spirit was to be followed by the emergence of the nationalist Ethiopianism that used the reference to Ethiopia reaching out to God, in Psalm 68:31, to advance a break from the ethnically based struggles of the past, to a non-ethnic African agenda for emancipation – featuring the efforts of Revds Nehemiah Tile, Mangena Mokone, James Dwane, Jeremiah Mzimba, Henry Ngcayiya (later to become ANC Chaplain); and the historic Charlotte Makgomo Mannya (later Maxeke). The Ethiopian Movement had an influence on Dr Dube, the 1912 ANC president, and he brought to the ANC and national intercessions, Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika (God Bless Africa), the hymn written by Enoch Sontonga, son-in-law to Abraham Mngqibisa, one of the founders of the Ethiopian Church.

The significant role of the church-based struggles, especially as championed and institutionalised in the Bible-inspired concept of the Ethiopian Movement, is that they created a critical bridge between the disparate tribal anti-colonial struggles and the non-ethnic ANC some twenty years later, and finally to a non-racial pursuit to be enshrined in the 1955 Freedom Charter. Without this influence, our history may well have remained trapped in the dominance of ethnic constructs that have beset the politics of many countries in our continent.

Together with these symbolic witnesses of faith and fortitude, from the days of Tiyo Soga, we recognize indeed, an illustrious array of “Christian soldiers” of the struggle.

These include the likes of Enoch Mgijima, all the way up to Sophiatown's Trevor Huddleston and his then Bishop of Johannesburg Ambrose Reeves, who was deported in 1960 for his bitter stand against Apartheid.

A WORD ABOUT OUR WALK TOGETHER SINCE 1912

The first words to be used at the inaugural ANC Conference, held on January 8th 1912 in Bloemfontein, were words of prayer followed by the singing of the hymn 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika'. The initial ideals of the movement were based on a common understanding of what the Church calls 'gospel values' of justice, equality and the dignity that belongs to all people under God.

The formative influence of the Church is evident in the people who convened the conference and those who were chosen to lead the organisation; the mission schools that provided their education; and the provision of resources to enable the organisation to establish itself.

Its first President, John Langalibalele Dube, was a church minister. Many who followed owed an allegiance to the church: We recall the resilient Rev Zaccheus Mahabane, twice president of the ANC (1924 – 27; 1937 – 40); and the steady Rev Canon James Calata (ANC Secretary General: 1936 – 1949). It is in this tradition that Chief Albert Luthuli, President General of the ANC between 1952 and 1967 was to strongly state the connection between his faith and his engagement through the ANC:

"I am in Congress precisely because I am a Christian. My Christian belief about society must find expression here and now, and Congress is the spearhead of the real struggle My own urge, because I am a Christian, is to get into the thick of the struggle with other Christians, taking my Christianity with me and praying that it may be used to influence for good the character of the resistance."

These words of a revered ancestor of the ANC indicate more than any modern historic analysis the connection between the Christian community and the Christian faith in the struggles of our people, including in the life of the African National Congress.



A picture of "the black Christ" by Ronald Harrison, depicting Chief Luthuli on the cross, and BJ Vorster as one of the soldiers

A WORD ABOUT OUR WALK TOGETHER SINCE 1955

If Archbishop Trevor Huddleston or Canon Calata were alive today, they would be able to tell us all about their involvement, and the involvement of many Christians, in the drafting of the Freedom Charter at Kliptown in 1955. They would speak of and about the events at Sharpeville and beyond that. They would be able to tell us of the violent forced removals from Sophiatown that happened on the 9th February 1955 and how the Apartheid regime vindictively renamed the area **Triomf**. They might challenge us on whether we could not be more creative in our planning in removing the spatial separation imposed by the Group Areas Act. They may remind us that building social cohesion and moving away from the racial and ethnic silos continue to be inhibited by racial separation in Church and Society

If Dr Beyers Naude was alive today, he would be able to speak about the many ways in which the Christian community stood against apartheid, at great cost to itself and to individuals who took a strong prophetic stand against apartheid. He might ask us what happened to that prophetic voice today. He might ask if the current ANC government as well as the Christian community, given our history, are not able to better differentiate between the prophetic voice and constructive criticism of faith communities on the one hand and oppositionism on the other.

Oom Bey would remind us that the faith community, on the whole, has felt an easy bond with those who have given their lives for the struggle for liberation; those who left home and family in order to struggle for social justice, and those who became the rock around which their community organised. Indeed, liberation theology expresses the shared imperative and commitment to struggle. One of Oom Bey's key legacies is one that takes often painful positions of conscience from within the context of his or her own people, his or her own vested interests, and what he or she grew up with and cherished.

He would tell us that in these days, when the values that guided the liberation struggle are too often swamped by greed for riches and for positions of power, it is fitting to call to mind the society that we wished to create together. At a time when cadres of the movement behave all too often as did those we struggled against together, it is fitting to renew our shared commitment to service. At this time when society craves leadership towards social justice and peace it is fitting that we reflect together, however painful this may be, about what we have failed to address since the advent of democracy.

Albertina Sisulu, a lay Christian woman, because of her recent passing would be able to compare the role of women in the struggle against the Apartheid regime and the role of women today. She would remind us of her involvement in FedSAW and how with Helen Joseph and other women they marched to the Union Buildings for Justice rather than

only representivity. She would challenge both the party and the church to look more clearly at how patriarchy still pervades in much policy and practice. She would ask all of us to have a more gender-inclusive approach to all we do, rather than expecting women's interest only to be championed by certain organisations in the church or by the ANC women's league and a ministry dedicated to people with disability, as though women were a minority in our nation.

A WORD ABOUT OUR WALK TOGETHER SINCE 1976

In 1975 the church, in the voice of the then Dean of the Johannesburg Anglican Cathedral of St Mary's, The Rev. Desmond Tutu, warned the Vorster regime in public letters, of the rising anger of the youth, which erupted into a sustained uprising in June 1976. During this time much support and inspiration was given by the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), and the African Independent Churches Association (AICA).

Many of us grew up in the 1976 era, and stood side by side with the young people as we struggled against apartheid and faced the weapons of the Apartheid regime. Some of those young people paid the ultimate price for their commitment, while others are now part of the governing structures of our society. But a new generation of youth are suffering the full brunt of unemployment, poor health, lack of education and general lack of hope for a better future.

Archbishop-emeritus Tutu, Dr Alan Boesak, Rev Frank Chikane and many other prophets of truth, operating mainly under the banner of the SACC and some world bodies, can speak very clearly about this period, as well as the following period, since they were often leading and inspiring the internal struggle against apartheid. Not only did they stand very firmly against the evil of apartheid; they often had to stand against members of the faith community who insisted that "the church and politics do not mix" and therefore they suffered a double persecution: one from the Apartheid State and one from a certain section of the Church.

Tutu's words to the Eloff Commission in 1982 are a reminder of how the SACC viewed the work of liberation: **"I will show that the central work of Jesus was to effect reconciliation between God and us and also between man and man (sic)....from a theological and scriptural base, I will demonstrate that apartheid, separate development or whatever it is called is evil, totally and without remainder, that it is unchristian and unbiblical....If anyone were to show me that apartheid is biblical or Christian, I have said before and I reiterate now, that I would burn my Bible and cease to be a Christian"**

A WORD ABOUT OUR WALK TOGETHER SINCE 1983

The year 1983 is an important marker for South Africa, since it is the year, inspired by a call from Dr Boesak and leaders of the liberation movement, to form a united front against apartheid. In August of that year, the UDF was formed, and many church leaders again stood as patrons of this organisation, while others participated as part of the leadership.



Most of the leadership of the ANC would be aware of the Kairos Document of 1985, which was followed by a document called Violence: the new Kairos (which is still on the ANC's website at <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=3961>

The 1985 document is today the foundation of the work of Kairos Southern Africa, particularly in South Africa. It still inspires different situations, such as what has happened with Christians in Palestine. It went one step further than merely declaring apartheid a heresy: it analysed the theological assumptions of the church at the time and challenged it to become actively involved in resisting apartheid by adopting what it called "Prophetic theology", a new theological mode altogether.

Unfortunately many Christians interpreted this call as a call to only become involved in the anti-apartheid cause, and when this cause came to an end, the involvement of many Christians in reversing social and economic injustice in South Africa, also came to an end.

Many Christians lapsed back into the default position of “Church theology” and thus the decline of progressive Christian involvement in the nurturing and formation of the new South Africa began.

A WORD ABOUT OUR WALK TOGETHER SINCE 1994

We now turn to the various theological responses in South Africa since 1994: In preparation for the advent of a new non-racial, non-sexist, just and equitable democratic society, some progressive theologians, like Villa-Vicencio, began to talk about the ‘theology of reconstruction’, including concepts of ‘middle axioms’ which are meant to move society from one stage to another subject to the ‘renewing power of the gospel’ which always demands more than society can deliver at any given time. In this regard some of the Christian leaders were drawn into Government to be part of the process of the transformation and reconstruction of our society.

On the other hand theological seminars held before the 1994 democratic elections came up with concepts like ‘critical solidarity’ with the new democratic government, but in reality many church activists assumed positions of ‘critical distance’ between themselves and the new democratic state which turned them into ‘wilderness prophets’ who spoke ‘truth to power’ with very little impact on the state, if any.

The older generation of the ANC leadership, like Nelson Mandela, saw the church as ‘partners’ in the struggle for the reconstruction and development of the South Africa society in the same way in which the church partnered with the liberation movement to end the apartheid system. Mandela’s view was that there were aspects of the reconstruction and development of society – what he called the ‘RDP of the soul’ – which he said only the church can deal with and this is what gave birth to the National Religious Leaders Forum.

Mbeki, who followed after Mandela, developed this into the Religious Working Group with government in the same way as he did with business, labour, youth, women, and so forth.

There was also the development of the Moral Regeneration programme which was led by the then Deputy President Jacob Zuma. Some would consider these approaches as risky as it could develop into what is called ‘State Theology’.

The latest development we have noticed, of reward for those who support the ANC, especially during elections, comes closer to the concept of ‘State Theology’ where some church leaders are at the ‘service of the party’ in a party political sense rather than be at

the 'service of the people'. Here, the prophetic voice dies at the 'altar' of the party and turns church leaders into uncritical 'praise singers' of the party.

Our responses have therefore varied: Even though many of us responded to this new situation with what we called "critical solidarity", we have now come to realise that our key solidarity has to be with the poorest of the poor and the marginalised in society.

In the same way, as "speaking truth to power" became a catch-phrase in our midst, we now realise that "speaking truth to people" and becoming involved in organisations of the people is probably a much more appropriate response, since those in power rarely respond positively to a truth that is being spoken to them. We were hoping that the language of "power" would be transformed into the language of "service" but we have been disappointed that this has not yet happened in any significant way.

As we enter into the second century of the life of the ANC, we hope that the ANC will learn that a church that collaborates uncritically with the party or the State can be of no use to the party in terms of its national strategic objective. A National Democratic Revolution (NDR) requires constructive critical voices within civil society to save the very revolutionary objectives of the party, which is always at risk as our human nature tends to slide into sectarian and self-interests in contrast to the interests of the people, especially the poor.

Church theology, which is the default theological position held by most Christians, will probably say that it is not necessary for us to even comment on the centenary of the ANC. It wants Christians to be "neutral", focus on the "preaching of the gospel", etc and therefore would see this exercise as irrelevant. We reject this notion of Church Theology as we cannot separate our faith and spiritual life from the rest of our life. This attempt at dualism is counterproductive and needs to be rejected by all Christians.

Prophetic Theology is therefore about being in solidarity with and in struggle with the poorest of the poor, since that is where Jesus is to be found. It is also about "speaking truth to people" since this is the only language that will truly set us all free. That truth will also continue to empower and inspire us to continue resisting that our society becomes one where the voices of the poorest are drowned out and where their needs are trivialised as mere "entitlement".

In the prophetic Spirit of Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of Love, it is the entitlement of the rich, the powerful and those who serve their interests that needs to be constantly challenged, since this is the dominant narrative in South Africa at the moment.

A PASTORAL WORD TO THE ANC

The Church is fully aware of the corporate and personal difficulties and challenges facing those in government.

Like those in power, the Church and especially its leadership, is not immune to the temptation of enrichment and other failings that compromise its integrity and its ability to do what is right and just. We therefore speak to the ruling party and to all who exercise power and authority out of a pastoral concern that is rooted in our own humanity and weakness.

We address especially those who are going through times of personal struggle as the demands of office affect family life and relationships, those who are tempted to use their position for personal gain rather than for the common good, as well as those whose health and well-being is suffering, or who are going through times of grief and mourning.

Be assured of our prayerful concern, and may you also heed our counsel to seek above all the welfare of those who voted you to leadership for the purpose of serving, to choose and act rightly according to your conscience informed by a passion for the truth, to love mercy and justice, and to respect those who are seeking to do the same even though you may disagree with them.

A WORD OF CAUTION AND CONCERN

We now spell out the following concerns for our country and for the ANC. These are our observations based on our discernment and what we have seen happening over the last 17 years. The list of concerns below is not exhaustive nor is our analyses of our situation. Suffice to say that with all the hope we cherish and our commitment to build this society and country, we also share with you our very deep sense of concern about our country, our people our future. Things can go terribly wrong if not addressed properly and as a matter of urgency. Other countries and situations have shown and are showing this clearly. We should not think that South Africa will necessarily be different.

1. Factionalism within the ANC: As the ANC prepares for its Mangaung conference in 2012, we see the continued factionalism and possibility that delegates will once again be asked to vote for one of two or three “slates”. Such factionalism is often the direct outcome of a weak conception of participatory democracy in our political parties. Of concern to us is that disunity and factionalism in the ANC affects leadership, governance

and service delivery, especially to the poorest communities. Moreover, quite often these internal battles are fought in the open in rather disrespectful even shameful ways and are often accompanied by violence, putting lives and livelihood of innocent people at risk. We are therefore also concerned that violence and threats of violence becomes a means for settling internal and national political disputes. Our message to the ANC in this regard is simple: **“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” (Matthew 12:25)** All attempts must be made to avoid factionalism and this stand must be communicated from the top leadership to all the branches of the ANC. We will urge church leaders to communicate this message of unity through the church communication channels as well. We do not think that such divisions are in the best interest of the future of South Africa. This contestation for power seems to be able to serve self, sectarian interests or factions, not for the purposes of serving the people (particularly the poor).

2. Our second concerns is that we need to find the best possible route, **maintaining our unity despite our diversity**, towards **economic justice** and together closing the gap between the richest and the poorest in South Africa. We recognise the temptation of some to hold onto their economic privilege, and ask that a national dialogue about this matter be held as soon possible. We have started some initiatives in this regard, where we will urge those who have “said sorry” and who have begun to implement some initiatives to give effect to this, to also begin to “do sorry”, but to do so as a national project together with all South Africans who have much more than they need. The aim of this will be to contribute more significantly to closing the gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa, and to do so not merely as individuals, but together.

3. **Our third concern relates to the security and intelligence forces and the maintenance of a proper order and structure within these forces and the link between this (or the lack of this) and the increase of criminality:** For us, this is one of our biggest concerns at the moment. What has happened in various other countries (where the intelligence and security forces are manipulated for the benefit of a faction in society) is not what we want to see happening in South Africa. Politicising security forces is a recipe for instability, violence and conflicts between opposing forces within one State.

4. **Corruption:** The “arms deal” seems to have been the new South Africa’s “original sin” and we are happy that this is now getting the attention it deserves. It diverted our attention, our energy, our time and our resources away from focussing on the poorest of the poor. Corruption negatively impacts on the psyche and morality of our people, particularly that of the youth (who now believe that this was the only way to make quick money without much effort). Corruption seems to have now spread into party political activities where corrupt means of campaigning/contestation for power (votes, support, etc.) are used, thus compromising the leadership before they even go into government. How political parties are funded is also a concern that we have, and we

urge for greater transparency in this regard lest we discover that things happened in our elections that the general population would not have approved of.

5. Maintaining a real social cohesion in the country: The strong leadership given by President Mandela towards building social cohesion in South Africa must continue. We thank God for his example, and call on all the leaders of the ANC to continue in his footsteps, not only for ourselves but also to serve as an example for and to honour expectations expressed towards us by the rest of Africa and for communities across the world.

6. The unsustainability of an opulent “American dream” lifestyle: this is sometimes popularised in South Africa and becomes our nightmare, since to reach this so-called dream, often means self-enrichment and quick enrichment at the expense of the poorest and at the expense of the ecology. South Africa’s recent hosting of COP17, on the eve of these centenary celebrations, must spur us to a decisive position and culture in this regard.

7. The relatively poor standards of education for the vast majority of the poor in our land: Relevant and effective education is required for intellectual and industrial productivity in a competitive world; as Nelson Mandela has said: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

8. Making solidarity with the oppressed across the world a key to our international relations: People across the world, especially those in Africa as well as the Palestinian people, look to us for strong support. We come from a history where we called on the world to promote sanctions against an unjust regime and we call on the ANC to continue with this legacy to ensure that justice for people rather than trade become our first priority.

9. Respecting the constitution of the Republic: Our constitution is hailed as one of the best in the world and is constantly being interpreted by our Constitutional court. A healthy democracy needs checks and balances, and even though this may be frustrating for you at times, we ask that the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Constitutional court and the decisions emanating from it, be held in the highest regard by us all.

We love our country, our people, our land, our continent. With these words we commit ourselves to continue building a better future for its children and generations to come, in moving away from the remainders of colonialism and apartheid, especially the disunity fostered by it, and doing what we need to do now to build unity amongst and between our people.

A WORD ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE ANC

1. Relationship between the Churches and the ANC: Certain statements by some denominations have gone as far as urging its members to not vote for the ANC, while others have urged people to vote for the ANC. We urge for more direct communication between the Church leaders and the ANC government to resolve whatever tensions there may be and to develop a common understanding of the relationship between church and state. We will also have to advise churches to be careful in promoting or opposing any particular political party, including the ANC.

2. The active co-option of partisan theologians and Church leaders by the ANC: As theologians who discern the work of God in the world, we have a certain understanding about what kinds of theologies are good for the building of unity amongst all God's people, and those which militate against the common good. There is a worrying trend within the ANC to co-opt and promote Church leaders who clearly do not have a liberatory perspective (but who might be involved in charity or development or be willing to uncritically bless the ANC). We simply want to hold this up to the ANC as a mirror and ask it to reflect on this matter, in its own interest and in the interest of the best values and morals as we move forward to build South Africa.

3. Treatment of Archbishop Tutu: Earlier this year we were profoundly disappointed with the actions of the ANC government which led to the Dalai Lama not visiting the country in response to an invitation from Archbishop-emeritus Tutu. What happened here is an example of what we have been warning about in this document: choosing Mammon above God. We feel that a national debate about this should be held. We will encourage this debate within civil society and hope that the ANC will take note of the outcomes of this debate. We do not wish for the ANC to be "like all governments" across the world: we call the ANC to higher standards, those standards which will make us as citizens proud of it, otherwise we will not be able to justify any support for the ANC.

A WORD ABOUT WHERE OUR FOCUS WILL BE

Seek ye first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), is our mandate. By this we mean that God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven, a kingdom of reconciliation, of justice, peace and beauty. We see the ANC mandate as narrower than this but, in our context, complementary to it. For this reason, the government of the day would always be urged by us to do better than it is doing.

Kairos SA is clear that, at least in the South African context, we will focus over the next ten years on closing the gap between the richest and the poorest in South Africa, by attempting to empower both. Both the rich and the poor must not think that it is about disempowering the rich in order to empower the poor and neither is it simply about charity from the rich towards the poor, while leaving the poor disempowered. A key component of this will be to work for the eradication of corruption that undermines our hard earned democracy.

This also calls for a vibrant democracy where the meaningful participation of the people in public life will be paramount. We must further guard strenuously against playing off the interest of one section of our communities against those of others, using especially racial motives, ethnicity, gender, religion and country of origin. We ought to be particularly sensitive to the plight of refugees that are drawn to our country, seeking a better life and security. These things have been offered to our thousands of exiles during the Apartheid years.

We pray that we can dream new dreams together and work together towards its fulfilment: a dream where there will be no more shacks in South Africa, a dream where no person has to go to sleep hungry, a dream where entrepreneurs will feel encouraged and motivated because of the environment that has been created for them to create new businesses, new industries and new jobs, a dream where every citizen feels safe and where no citizens are discriminated against on the basis of race or ethnicity, a dream where the environment is protected to ensure that future generations may also enjoy the fruits of the earth.

This is our dream for this country, and we pray that you will dream this dream with us.

A PROPHETIC WORD TO THE ANC

A time will come when the history of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid will become dim and young people will look forward rather than backward. We urge the ANC to begin to focus more on this **new time** rather than on the days when South Africans were locked in struggle against each other. We now want to engage with fellow citizens across the world, as proud South Africans who are building a country for all our citizens.

Education of our people is therefore key. The education sector must be prioritised and modern infrastructure, sports equipment and science equipment needs to be supplied to our schools, especially to those who can afford it least. The Church and the entire religious sector have capacity in this regard and are already busy with some initiatives and can contribute significantly in partnership with others to ensure that the education

of our children and young people are of the highest possible standard. Woe to those who neglect the education of our children!

The poor in our midst have begun to lose patience at their entrapment in the cycle of poverty and our inability to assist them to be lifted out of this. No amount of memory of past struggles will lift the poor out of poverty. The cycle of poverty must be broken by all means possible!

The worship of Mammon (money) is one of the key signs of our times, for all people everywhere on this planet, and we need to take a strong stand against this in our country if we want to ensure our future together. The choice is stark. **“No one can serve two masters, he will always love one and ignore the other” (Matthew 6:24).**

A WORD OF HOPE AND BLESSING

We congratulate the ANC for all it has achieved in South Africa during the last hundred years. The movement has been a great source of hope for the vast majority of our people.

Our hope is rooted in our Lord Jesus Christ who has overcome death and for whom nothing is impossible.

Our prayer today is that despite all its present problems the ANC will continue to inspire hope by learning from the past and by taking decisive action during this centenary year to begin to eradicate corruption, factionalism, selfish individualism, power struggles, ill discipline and most of all the scandalous neglect of the poor.

May God bless all in the ANC who are genuinely trying to do this.

God bless Africa

Guard our children

Guide our leaders

And give us peace.

For Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen

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