

**An Ecumenical Call from our Reformed Family of Churches in the Free State,
for Electoral Integrity and Good Governance**



2024 marks the 30th anniversary of our democratic dispensation after the demise of Apartheid. We vividly remember the images of long queues of people waiting to cast their votes for the first time in 1994. There was a feeling of optimism and a sense of hope then, but – as the years went on – reality transpired and we find ourselves 30 years into our fragile democracy with rising poverty levels, crime threatening our livelihoods, domestic violence casting a shadow of fear over our women and children and with service delivery that is in many Free State communities almost non-existent. Among most of our people there is a palpable sense of hopelessness.

We, the undersigned representatives of our Reformed Family of churches in the Free State, representing diverse communities of our Province, are united by a common commitment to the Bible, to justice, peace and the promotion of human dignity. We hereby declare our collective resolve to uphold the Biblical principles of integrity, fairness, and accountability in the way we are governed and the way electoral processes are executed in the runup and the aftermath of the 2024 general elections. We recognize the critical role of this General Election in shaping the future of our society and the imperative of selecting leaders who embody principles of servant leadership and good governance. We affirm our shared responsibility in safeguarding the democratic values that underpin our communities. We commit ourselves to praying for our leaders, our communities, and our electorate. We pray for God's peace to prevail in all and we commit to actively working to be the peacemakers Matthew 5:12 talks about.

We would like to remind our church members, our community leaders and national populace of the Biblical imperative to governance and the social responsibility of the church:

1. Scriptural References on Governance:

- *Romans 13:1-2 (NIV):* "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."
- *Proverbs 29:2 (NIV):* "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan."
- *1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV):* "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

2. Scriptural References on the Church's Social Responsibility:

- *Micah 6:8 (NIV):* "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

- *Matthew 25:35-36 (NIV)*: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."
- *James 1:27 (NIV)*: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Our declaration urges the following pertaining to the upcoming 2024 General Election:

1. **Election Monitoring and Oversight:** We urge our members to participate on local levels in the independent election monitoring mechanisms, comprising members of our faith communities (SACC) and civil society partners, to observe and report on electoral proceedings. Through impartial observation and diligent scrutiny, we can play a role to safeguard the integrity and safety of elections, deter electoral malpractices, and hold accountable those responsible for electoral misconduct.
2. **Promotion of Ethical Leadership:** We advocate for the selection of candidates who demonstrate a commitment to ethical conduct, servant leadership, and the common good of all people who live in our beautiful country. Drawing upon Biblical moral teachings and ethical principles, we call upon political parties and electoral stakeholders to prioritize integrity, competence, and accountability in the nomination and endorsement of candidates for public office.
3. **Prayer and Reflection:** We commit to fostering a spirit of prayerful discernment and reflection among our members in the coming weeks, invoking divine guidance and wisdom as we navigate the complexities of our country. Therefore, we call on all member churches to devote time in their services on Sunday, the 5th of May, for prayers with this General Election 2024 in mind. We recognize the inherent dignity of every human person in the eyes of God. We affirm that God entrusted this beautiful country to us all so that the country can provide a peaceful home for us all. We offer our prayers for justice, peace, and the common good, trusting in the transformative and healing power of the Holy Spirit. This election will indeed follow only a week after the Sunday of Pentecost!
4. **Go out and vote!** We emphasize the responsibility of each member in our communities, to use their vote this time with great responsibility and in the presence of our Lord, the King of kings, to vote for a responsible government, so that we all "may live a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and holiness" before God and in this country (1 Timothy 2).

In witness thereof, we the Moderature of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (Free State and Lesotho Synod), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (Free State and Lesotho Synod) and the Dutch Reformed in the Free State, reaffirm our shared commitment to electoral integrity, democratic governance, and the pursuit of a more just, equitable and peaceful society. May our collective efforts inspire hope, foster unity, and advance the cause of peace and justice in our nation and communities.

From the Moderators of participating churches:

Rev L Letsele (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa)

Fokase (Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa)

Rev J Lubbe (Dutch Reformed Church)