



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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Message To the People Called Methodist – Participation In 2024 Elections

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) is cognizant that 2024 will be a year in which citizens in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa will be required to vote in their respective national government elections. These are important processes, and the MCSA affirms participation in elections by all adult citizens as a basic human right and, encourages Methodists to fulfil their God given right and responsibility.

Why should Methodists participate in Democratic Elections?

As Methodists we believe that human beings are created in God's image and are given dominion over creation to be custodians and stewards of God's resources including mother earth and all who live in her (Genesis 1:26). According to our Methodist principles we are to hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections. These form the very foundation of democratic governance through the autonomous selection of leaders.

This divine responsibility is given to every human-being and should be carried out with intentional consciousness. This responsibility is essential in all aspects of life; in other words, human beings should ensure that they carry out their life-giving responsibility of loving, protecting, and caring for God's creation. Notably, churches have the responsibility of encouraging, protecting and promoting democracy, justice, equality, security and fairness in all sectors of social life.

The theological conviction which undergirds this argument is that every human being is created by God with the intention that all should give expression to their natural creativity. Human creativity also has historical effects- evidenced in inventions, tools, organizations, and the like-whose benefits and responsibilities belong to everyone. This value is theologically expressed in the idea of 'shared dominion,' or better in respect of an ecologically sound understanding of the human being in the world, 'shared responsibility.' The denial of this intention, the undermining of it, or the abrogation of it, are all anti-theological" (Cochrane 2016: 4).

The Christian model of democracy and participation is guided by our desire for a state in which everything is perfect, and in our simplified yet profound theological ideology is underpinned by kingdom hope and God's reign. Thus, it is incumbent upon those who call themselves believers in God to resemble embodied faith, hope and love.

Elections are about people participating in state power. As the MCSA we are conscious of the implications of political power and how it is distributed. However, casting of votes is deeper than just deciding who should be in power; it has everything to do with people deciding about individual and communal life matters which impacts on the livelihood and future of all citizens.

Despite the ongoing socio economic and political failures of governments, Christians cannot afford to give away their rights of participating in essential life decisions of power. Abstaining from voting relinquishes our right of access to better livelihoods, and that of holding elected officials accountable to their election

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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manifestos and the national constitution. Most importantly we deny ourselves the opportunity to exercise our divine responsibility of having dominion over God's creation.

A call to participate in elections is not only political, but is central to our spiritual responsibility to ensure that respect for human dignity, justice, peace and security for all God's people is upheld.

Things You Can Do:

- Register to vote or ensure that you are registered to vote.
- Support voter registration drives.
- Encourage community members to vote.
- Participate in Voter Education workshops
- Engage and understand all political party manifestos

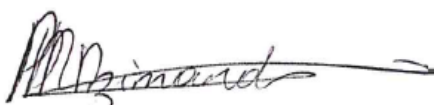
The MCSA Conference 2000/2001:

“noting that the MCSA is desirous of projecting a neutral image by not aligning itself with any political party wished to ensure that the governments of the day exercises power fair and just manner, and will therefore speak out against anything that we deem to be morally wrong in society particularly as we prepare for elections...”

The Church as a faith community with a responsibility to all its members is to remain neutral. Please be reminded that Methodist pulpits and worship services/gatherings are not spaces for political speeches and our churches are not to be used for political party campaigns. Political leaders are allowed to worship with us but should not be treated differently to other worshippers. No political party banners or posters may be displayed in or on our property.

It is my prayer that all Methodist people will do the right thing by casting your votes in 2024. Remember that you reserve the right to vote for the party of your choice.

Yours in Christ's vineyard



Rev Pumla Nzimande
Presiding Bishop

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