

# **PRESS RELEASE DOCUMENT: NO. 1**

## **A PASTORAL LETTER FROM KWAZULU-NATAL CHURCH LEADERS GROUP ON VIOLENCE IN THE PROVINCE.**

31 October 2018

*Romans 12:17-19 New International Version (NIV): “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone....” says the Lord.*

**Introduction and Greetings:** We, the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders’ Group (KZNCLG) and the ecumenical movement of KwaZulu-Natal greet the people of the province. Through this pastoral letter we want to draw your attention to how the violence we are experiencing has reached a totally unacceptable level. We need to pray earnestly that God’s Holy Spirit may help us to make our province more peaceful.

**Vengeance or Distributive Justice:** Our province finds itself once again in a position of absolute vulnerability, pain and hurt as a result of the murders and violence that are becoming ever more prevalent in South Africa and especially in this province. In responding to this violence, the justice of God favours mercy and grace rather than punishment and revenge. Let us therefore pursue the things which are good in KZN and then our communities will be healed.

**Statistical Context:** The police statistics for 2017/18 indicate that murders in KZN have increased from 4014 to 4382, sexual offences from 8484 to 8759, common assaults, from 22285, to 22842. In addition there were approximately 40 politically aligned killings within the period May 2016 to August 2018.

**A Theological Reflection:** Reflecting on these alarming statistics from only one theological point of view, namely the theology of retribution, will only exacerbate the problem. By contrast the doctrines of forgiveness, peace, reconciliation and the pursuit of the common good for all humanity give us hope that peace based on economic justice, caring and sharing is the way to enhance human dignity for all.

### **A clarion call for action:**

*Genesis 4:9-10 (NKJV)*

*Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”<sup>10</sup> And God said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground”*

- The KZNCLG urges preachers to spread the message of peace, hope, stability, ubuntu and respect for human life.

- We should call for kindness and compassion towards one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave us (Eph. 4: 32).
- We should also call on our congregants and members to report to the police cases of crime and suspicious acts that may lead to violence in our vicinities.
- Ceaseless prayers for justice and peace are needed, especially in the pre- and post-election period in 2019, that the elections may be free, fair and peaceful in all our communities.

**Conclusion:** This pastoral letter has attempted to alert people that the violence we are experiencing has reached unacceptable levels. However our response to this violence must not be one of vengeance and retributive justice but earnestly seeking economic and distributive justice

### Helpful Contacts:

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Signed at: ..... on this .....2018

1. KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders Group - Chairperson:

Signature:

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