

As we are all acutely aware, in 10 days' time, South Africans will head to the polls to cast their votes in the general election. After what seems to have been a very long and drawn-out build-up to these elections, the time seems suddenly near. Over the last couple of weeks, I have become increasingly aware of the anxieties and fears people are experiencing, with regards to the future of our beautiful country. There is unease amongst many as we wait for the IEC to make its final decision on Jacob Zuma's eligibility to stand as his party's candidate. There are murmurings of a repeat of the violent July 2021 riots and looting if the decision does not go in favour of the former president. The signing of the NHI bill into legislation this week has also created much consternation, and I have heard many people wondering if the exodus of friends and family to other countries was the right thing to do after all. "Is our country going to go belly up?" It is difficult to deny that the anxiety, the mistrust, the fear, is real, and has crept into so many of our communities. This barbed wire has become intertwined in our conversations, in some of our actions; it has brought prejudices, and perhaps even ugly hatreds of some people or groups of people, to the fore. Come, let us pray. Holy Spirit, just as your disciples sat behind closed doors, filled with fear and uncertainty on that first Pentecost, we acknowledge that we too are fearful and uncertain, about what may happen over the next couple of weeks in our country. The threat of possible violence; the fear of the unknown; the despair of worsening poverty, unemployment, lack of health care and education...it all looms large for so many.

And so, Lord, we pray firstly, that you will settle our souls, our hearts, our minds. Remind us again that you are the Spirit of the Living, the Living God. The pink hue of the sunrise, the soft touch of the drizzle, the changing colours of the autumn leaves, whisper your presence, and remind us that you are in love with your world, and in love with your people. And as we face the winds of change in this country, may we recognise God's gentle breath blowing over the land. May we breathe in what you breathe out.

Spirit of Peace, we pray for those in power; those whose priority is protecting themselves, and what they believe to be theirs; those making promises they probably have no intention of keeping; those burning flags; those threatening with guns; those driven by ego and self-centredness; those determined to dominate, regardless of consequences- we pray that you will open their hearts to choose Life, not death. We pray for the miracle of the Jesus Way of justice, mercy, humility, gentleness, compassion, and peace. Move us all in this time, to pray for our enemies; to find the less trodden path of forgiveness.

We thank you that in uncertain times, you are the Spirit of Surprise- may we be surprised by Hope. May the fear of fires and riots be replaced by the hope of the flame of your Spirit, the love and the light represented by the burning Candle. May we move out of love, not out of fear, knowing that whatever we are facing as a nation, your love will never let us go. Lord God, we abandon ourselves into your hands, surrendering the barbed wire of doubts, anxiety, fear, and prejudices, and trusting in the Light of peace, hope and justice. Renew our beloved land, we plead.

And so, we pray together:
God bless Africa and all the world.
Guard our children.
Guide our leaders.
And give us peace.