

Rebuilding the Ruins.  
Isaiah 58 vs. 1-12

Opening Alex.  
Presbyt. Church  
1877.92.

Isaiah 58 vs 12 : Your people will rebuild what has long been in ruins, building again on the old foundations. You will be known as the people who rebuilt the walls, who restored the ruined houses.

I wish to congratulate you as a congregation with the opening of your church building, especially under the very difficult circumstances that you had to work here in Alexandria as a congregation during the last 2 years. For many of our members of your church and of all churches and of many of the people staying in Alexandria the past year and more was one where thousands lived in anxiety and fear, where violence, burning of homes, conflict leading to shooting and killing, bloodshed and death became an almost daily occurrence. In addition to that violence in many parts of the country killed ± 7000 people since Feb. 1990 and in addition to that we have witnessing massive forms of Corruption, bribery, dishonesty and theft taking on frighte-ning proportions.

These deeply disturbing developments were

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further exacerbated by increasing political strife and discord, by rising unemployment, poverty and hunger (partly caused by the serious drought), by increasing use of dangerous drugs, by escalating sexual abuse (incl. rape) as well as a frighting increase in crime of all sorts.

If we place these deeply disturbing developments alongside the proud tradition that we have proclaimed of a country where 90% of all whites describe themselves as Christians (and 70% of all Blacks), where we have always referred to S.A. as a Christian country with a Christian government and a Christian people going to church every Sunday, worshipping & praying as God demands — then there is something drastically wrong somewhere. Because we here to-day, and every church in every part of the country, must ask ourselves: what is the sense of erecting more church buildings, of having more worship services, of preaching the Gospel Sunday after Sunday if our nation has become a nation of robbers, of crooks, of thieves, of murderers, of corrupt leaders?  
(See list of F.F.F. — Monday 13 July 1992)

What does the word Christian then mean? Deflated its meaning

This leads me to ask this question which I believe is ~~at the~~ <sup>of</sup> central ~~to the question~~ <sup>significance</sup> ~~of~~ our whole country:

What do we need most as a nation at this crucial moment of our history?

1) Peace: All of us are deeply disturbed about the escalation of violence in our country - all of us except the small number of individuals or ~~sect~~ groups who provoke, instigate & exercise violence - esp. political violence. If there is one township in SA, where this deep longing has almost become a cry out of the depth of our hearts, it is Alexandria. We all want peace! - and live in peace!

2) Justice: All of us are deeply aware how the policy of apartheid was one of the main forces which, esp. since 1948 <sup>over</sup> ~~for more than 46 years~~ created, sustained, fostered and strengthened a canon, a policy of oppression, injustice, and exploitation. This included injustice regarding human rights, regarding the distribution of sources, of land, of wealth, of work.

a new day is now dawning where the majority of our people <sup>are</sup> saying: We demand justice for all: political, economic, educational, social justice!

3) Prosperity: (not riches but a reasonable, adequate share of the country's resources, wealth, land, production)

3.1 - High employment

3.2 - Better training

3.3 - Proper education

3.4 - Home & shelter for each family.

What do we need as a church?

- 1) To restore the foundations upon which a just & human society can be built (vs. 12)
- 2) To oppose and end every form of oppression and injustice (vs. 6 & 9)
- 3) To share both our spiritual gifts & our material possessions (vs. 10)  
(Example of your own congregation)

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Question: Is it not primarily the task of the government? Yes, decidedly so - but what does one do when the government is one of the major forces in, <sup>neglecting or</sup> violating these duties?

Certainly: task of the government - but also task of the business community, task of the educ. bodies, task of the political bodies, the cities, the women's organisations - all have their respective duties to fulfill!

But the church has a special task:

- 1) Expose all oppression & injustice
- 2) Oppose all dishonesty, corruption, unjust distribution of resources, of land, of wealth
- 3) Support all bodies & institutions which sincerely strive after these goals  
& culture
- 4) Foster a climate of peace, of justice, of reconciliation, of mediation
- 5) Set personal examples in our own churches & congregations