

Voices from the South



THE
KARIBU
FOUNDATION

E-Newsletter - March 2012

A word to the ANC

In early 2012, Kairos Southern Africa drafted a critical letter to the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. Rev. Edwin Arrison, coordinator of Kairos Southern Africa, talks to Karibu about the letter, Kairos' meeting with ANC leadership, and their 1-million signature campaign.

Karibu: What circumstances prompted Kairos Southern Africa to write this letter to the ANC?

Rev. Arrison: For a while now, we have noticed the strange phenomenon that the ANC thinks – or at least expresses in different ways - that it *alone* has brought liberation to the people of South Africa.

Certainly they have played a very significant role, and that is why the majority of the people voted them into power and continue to do so.

But to dismiss what others have done to keep the

flame of freedom alive in the country -- especially while you were banned or branded as terrorists -- or to assimilate it under your umbrella, is really ahistorical and dishonest.

In particular, the role of individual Christians and the churches against colonialism, ethnicity, tribalism and apartheid has not been sufficiently recognized and we have now begun to put this on paper to remind the ANC and ourselves of this role.

Many church people have actually expressed surprise to read about the role of the Churches and individual Christians in our society. So, the letter was really to counter a certain ignorance, to educate and to use this education as

a way of re-empowering ourselves to once again take our rightful place in this society.

In mid-February, Kairos Southern Africa was invited to meet with the ANC in regards to this letter. Can you describe the meeting?

It was a good meeting, but I could sense that the ANC could not distinguish between how a progressive theology group can naturally be in the trenches alongside a liberation movement, but cannot naturally be alongside a government whose members often focus on power and patronage.

We told the ANC that we can engage with them, but not be embedded with them. We tried to explain this to them but



Members of Kairos Southern Africa meet with leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). Cape Town, South Africa. 8 February, 2012

Founded in 1985, the Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South that provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

Visit our website to sign-up for "Voices from the South," our monthly e-newsletter.

<http://www.karibu.no>
voices@karibu.no

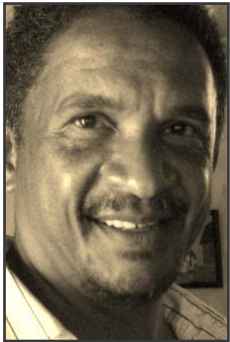
*The Karibu Foundation
Kirkens Hus
Rådhusgt 1-3
0151 Oslo
Norway*



Kairos Southern Africa is a network that provides encouragement and/or support for those who live out a Kairos spirituality, those that carry forward the legacy of the 1985 Kairos document, and those that connect with other Kairos prophetic voices on the African continent and in the rest of the world.



Photo: Soweto, Johannesburg



Rev. Edwin Arrison, coordinator of Kairos Southern Africa

“I think [the ANC] realizes that an active citizenry is good for South Africa, not just a passive one who expects government to do everything for them.”

they could not understand, and even tried to make us feel guilty by saying “had you been there, we could have avoided some of the sins of incumbency”.

The most important part of the meeting for me was that the ANC expressed that they could not dismiss us as one of the many voices “out there” who criticize them, since they respected us for the work we have done and what we still intend on doing.

They, interestingly, also encouraged us in what we were doing and in our million signature campaign. I think they realize that an active citizenry is good for South Africa, not just a passive one who expects government to do everything for them.

Speaking of this campaign, Kairos Southern Africa has now begun to gather 1 million signatures endorsing the letter. What are your hopes in gathering so many signatures?

If we had settled on just 100 or even 1000 signatures, the discussions that we are hoping to unlock would have remained with only a few people. The campaign would have been over by now since we have now already reached 1000 signatories.

The target of 1 million (or 2% of the population of 50 million) of those over 16 years old means that we will have reached a significant amount of people over a year-long period. This will sustain the discussion and make it both broad and deep.

At this stage we are asking people “to make every signature a prayer”. Can you imagine what a million prayers will do for South Africa! Some people are already talking about this in Bible Study groups, in Justice and Peace groups, etc.

Our biggest hope therefore is to get these kinds of discussions going on the ground amongst a significant part of the population in South Africa this year, and particularly amongst Christians. This will then help

us to reconnect many people to the democracy, and to again play a significant role in the country in the same way that we played a significant role during the anti-apartheid struggle with the 1985 Kairos document.

What can we expect from Kairos Southern Africa in the near future?

You can expect from us to take this conversation and campaign to the grassroots, and to the congregations. We are already talking to bishops and clergy who will take this to their congregations.

We will also be meeting with ANC leadership again on March 22nd to continue the conversation, which is a positive sign.

To learn more about Kairos Southern Africa, and to read the letter, “A Word to the ANC, at this time,” visit <http://karibu.no/viewstories.asp?id=125>.

Photo credits: David Ritchie, Cape Argus (page 1 banner); Rev. Edwin Arrison; Ishanaa Rambachan

