

KAIROS 2012: Outline

Theologians and others from various fields of interest in South Africa are exchanging perceptions on a document they formulated towards the end of 2011 relating to the centenary celebrations of the African National Congress (ANC), the former protest- and resistance-movement, containing a range of theological and ethical reflections and questions. This Paper_>> [Kairos Southern Africa](#), also named [KAIROS 2012](#), has since been translated into isiZulu [[iThuba-Nhlanhla eMzansi-Afrika: Kairos Southern Africa](#)] and into German [[>> Kairos Südliches Afrika](#)].

KAIROS 2012 shall best be understood, if read in conjunction with the Kairos-Document of 1985 in which Christians from various areas of commitment in South Africa similarly declared that the decisive moment had come to maintain an unshakable stand with the poor and the oppressed “in a prophetic move” in resisting the apartheid system.

Some of the issues and questions in KAIROS 2012 in brief:

1. The introduction, in which the aim of these “theological and ethical reflections“ is being outlined, is entitled “A Word to the ANC in these Times“ which could had been a more appropriate heading for the document as a whole. The authors of the document “both congratulate ... and raise ... concerns” - all of this “in a spirit of true friendship“, sincere “appreciation and gratitude“. Especially “given the levels of poverty and inequality” in South Africa today, the authors “pray“, that of all things the celebrations be “not lavish“. Since “many Christian leaders“ had co-operated in founding and in developing the ANC over the past ten decades, the authors of KAIROS 2012 “continue[d] to feel a sense of responsibility” for what the ANC does or does not do today.
2. About “the coming of the Word into the world (John 1: 1)” and - repeatedly in the introduction - about a “dream” that - so the authors - all “once again [ought to can] dream” in the course of the centenary celebrations - “once again dream of a future of being one, united in our diversity” - is the introductory part. Right through the whole document leads the critical commentary of the authors stretching from experiences gone through and reaching over up to hopes and aspirations at present; their eye hovers and takes stock of the highlights and the darkest moments of the past hundred years through protest, resistance and fight. They do not have only thanks, acknowledgement, satisfaction and hope to proclaim, but also disapproval [scandal: the disenabling of the Dalai Lama to enter the country and the snubbing and ridicule of Archbishop Tutu], reproach [power-disuse and the “active co-option of partisan theologians and Church leaders ... willing to uncritically bless the ANC”] and challenge [poverty-elimination].
3. “Congratulations”, “appreciation”, “gratitude” and “confession” precede the review that the authors undertake which stretches over a lengthy account about “the Church [on] the road [up] to 1912” and “our Walk

together since 1912 [till 1994]” and culminate into a “[lamenting, admonishing, uplifting] pastoral Word”. The then following “Word of Caution and Concern” comprises of observations and demands in very clear language - ‘imbaba’ / ‘tacheles’ - in 9 points: The advancing “factionalism”, “corruption” and the “‘American dream’-lifestyle” are criticised unambiguously; “Respecting the Constitution” and “Solidarity with the Oppressed across the World” are urgently reminded of.

4. Would it for a while appear as if the authors - by recalling historic events [Sophiatown, Freedom Charta, Sharpeville, Soweto] and celebrated personalities - [unwarrantedly] felt obliged to prove that “the Church” had all along been walking side by side with the ANC and that “Christian leaders” had been active in resisting colonialism and apartheid, the method of associating matters of concern with appreciative remembrance of personalities from the resistance- and liberation-movement [Tiyo Soga, Trevor Huddleston, Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé, Albertina Sisulu, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane and others] helps keep urgent issues in mind that otherwise would easily be underestimated or simply overlooked.
5. Very questionable vocabulary [“Kaffirs“, “races“, “tribes”] stands next to thoroughly reflected concepts [“gender inclusive”]; verses from the bible are brought in seemingly at random and some statements sound like indirect quotations [“Woe to those who neglect the education of our children!”]. Such shortcomings discredit a document succeeding to maintain an outright friendly and assertive approach, create misleading impressions and may unnecessarily lead to assumptions of subtle antagonism, hair-splitting calculation, and notions of know-everything-better-instructor, which would be totally opposed to the very idea of “congratulating”.
6. Together with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu, further personalities [Renate Cochrane, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane] who either had authored or endorsed the Kairos-Document of 1985, have endorsed KAIROS 2012. Whereas early in May 2012 already 1.000 had signed, by mid-July 2012 just about 1.200 had done so. A million is aimed at by the end of the year. The ceremonial handing-over has already taken place; the effort of “building bridges” was acknowledged. This document retains its relevance and integrity by trying on the basis of approved traditions of the protest- and resistance-movement to sensitise the masses to continue watching those in government supportively whilst confronting them critically and uncompromisingly with their shortcomings and reminding them of the task to govern responsibly.
7. A few have up to now publicly taken a stand on request [e.g. [Renate Cochrane \(2012\): Kairos-Dokument Reflektionen](#)]. Public meetings or seminars and debates on KAIROS 2012 have as yet not been recorded.

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