



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

Pastoral Letter on the 2026 Municipal Elections:

A time to renew the spirit of the common good in our politics and in our daily lives.

“Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good” (Evangelii Gaudium, 205).

The forthcoming Local Government Elections of 2026 come at an important moment in the life of our nation. We remain grateful for the gift of democracy. At the same time, we cannot ignore the serious challenges facing our municipalities, especially the crisis of service delivery.

Many of our municipalities are not working as they should. That is why we have seen many communities struggling daily with water shortages, uncollected waste, poorly maintained roads and lack of facilities for recreation for our youth.

There are many reasons for the collapse in service delivery in our municipalities such as: nepotism, corruption, the capture of municipalities by organized crime, instability in coalition politics at the local government level, cadre deployment in key municipal positions, a lack of professionalism in the public service, and the politicization of ward committees, which are supposed to serve as instruments of accountability.

At the same time, we must also be honest about our own role as citizens. We contribute to the problem when we fail to play our part. This can be seen in the non-payment of municipal services, culture of bribing the staff at municipal offices, illegal electricity connections, unlawful occupation of land, vandalism of infrastructure, illegal dumping of waste, and the rise of violent crime.

All of this points to a weakening of our sense of the common good—the spirit of ubuntu—both in our politics and in our daily lives. The common good calls us to think beyond ourselves and to act in ways that benefit everyone.

We therefore appeal to all citizens, particularly the young people, to use the upcoming elections as an opportunity to renew our commitment to the common good. Voting is an important part of this. That is why we urge everyone to go out and vote. Nobody should remain at home.

However, voting alone is not enough. Holding those in power to account is important. Real change requires deeper commitment. Casting our vote must go hand in hand with our willingness to work for the common good—both within political parties and in our everyday lives as citizens.

In this context, the Word of God calls us to responsibility and hope: “... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life...” (Deuteronomy 30:19).



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

Choosing life means:

- Electing leaders who are committed to serving their communities with honesty and dedication.
- Being citizens who respect public property such as clinics, roads, and other infrastructure, and who reject vandalism and lawlessness.
- Supporting public officials who refuse corruption and nepotism.
- Encouraging political parties to work together in the spirit of the common good, especially in coalition governments, rather than focusing only on their own interests.
- Ensuring that ward committees are not captured by political parties or partisan interests, but truly serve the community.

Our prayer is that the 2026 municipal elections will be peaceful, free, and fair. We therefore call on all stakeholders—political parties, independent candidates, the media, civil society, and state institutions—to act responsibly. Every citizen must be able to vote without fear. The rule of law must be respected, and election results must be accepted in a spirit of peace and responsibility.

As we prepare for these elections, we entrust our nation to God in prayer.

May the Lord guide our leaders, strengthen our communities,
and inspire all citizens to act with wisdom and courage.

May He bless all those who work to ensure
that the elections are fair and transparent.

And may He help us to build a society
where justice, peace, and human dignity are respected by all.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Stephen Card. Brislin", with a horizontal line underneath.

Stephen Cardinal Brislin
President