

**SPEECH BY MEC FOR PUBLIC WORKS HONOURABLE
MR.HOWARD YAWA, MPL AT THE ANNUAL THANKSGIVING
FESTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST'S ASSEMBLIES
IN LEDIG ON THE 12 FEBRUARY 2006**

Programme Director

The Honourable Arch Bishop Siteo

Honourable Bishops Maleka, Molotsane, Bogatsu & Moeti

Honourable Ministers

Deacons

Evangelists

Basebeletsi

Phuthego e e kgethegileng

I am indeed very grateful and humbled by the invitation you have extended to me to be part of your Annual Thanksgiving Programme today. I bring you well wishes from the Honourable Premier, Mme Edna Molewa and my colleagues in the Executive Council.

I am delighted to be here because it provides me with an opportunity to formally thank you on behalf of the ANC led government for the role you played in the struggle to liberate our country, and the role that your church as part of the African Independent churches continue to play in fostering the spirit of nation building and reconciliation.

Right from their inception, the African Independent Churches played a crucial role in promoting a religious philosophy that was based on sound African value systems. Many of the leaders of Independent churches have assumed leadership positions in society over the years.

From as early as 1919, key leaders from the African Independent Churches such as Reverend Makgatho were preaching about equality and the right to human dignity as reflected by his statement in 1919 when he said "We need no favours from government, we shall not be treated like foreigners in our own country".

It is significant that most of our leadership in the early 20th Century, were staunch believers, for example John Mafukuzela Dube, the first President of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1912 to 1919, and of course Reverend Makgatho, the second ANC President, who was a founder of one of the early African Independent Churches, the United National Church.

We recognise the significant role that the founder of the Church of Christ's Assemblies, Prophetess Catherine Ngcwelane like other pioneers of African Independent Churches played in the lives of millions of South Africans. Like other pioneers of African Independent Churches, the great prophetess, Mother Ma-Mbhele as a spiritual leader made an important contribution in terms of

redefining what it means to be an African and a Christian at the same time.

Like our struggle heroines, Lillian Ngoyi, Ruth Mompati, Dora Tamana and Queen Modjadji, Mother Ma-Mbhele personified women's struggle against racial, gender and class oppression. Through her visionary and assertive leadership in the Church of Christ Assemblies, she contributed towards the redefinition of the role of women in society and prepared the ground for the struggle for gender equality.

As government, we understand the often neglected and marginalised history of the African Independent Churches, and understand the role that they continues to play today as churches with a mission to heal, hence many African Independent Churches are known as the healing churches.

The church in general has an important and critical role to plays in our society today, especially in building a society that cares and is built on the foundations of strong moral values.

The African Independent Churches in particular provide a massive constituency, through which we can all work together in building our nation, whether one belongs to the Church of Christ's Assemblies, the Zion Christian Church, or the Nazareth Baptist Church, we all belong to one country and have the same national interest.

We all need to work together to strengthen our families and communities and build a strong foundation for a caring society. This is a society where there would be no crime, rape, child abuse, women abuse, abuse of alcohol and drugs, no lack of respect for the elderly and no break down of family life.

This, I believe, is an achievable goal, depending on how we make a resolve, in every corner of our country, to confront our social ills and work to reduce, and eventually eradicate them.

The church, as partners with government in the Moral Regeneration Movement needs to continue to play a critical role in ensuring that the moral values of ubuntu such as respect for human life, and respect for each other are inculcated, especially among our youth.

We also see a key role for the church to play in alleviating the suffering caused by disease, especially AIDS. Across the country every day, I still see the churches and religious people and leaders alike taking care of the aged, nursing the sick, feeding and clothing the poor and orphans especially HIV and AIDS orphans. It is crucial for the church to continue to play a role in AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns. We greatly applaud, and appreciate these selfless efforts by the church, for they inspire the nation to greater moral heights.

This is what moral regeneration is all about. In the second decade of Freedom, we must look back at the distances that we have travelled together in eradicating all forms of discrimination, racism, sexism and the legacy of apartheid.

Before the historic April 27th Elections, South Africa was on the brink of collapse in all aspects and the future looked bleak, when, through your Prayers, active support, hard work and sacrifices, we crossed over into a new era of democracy, opportunities and empowerment. The fact that we have a sound and stable democracy and the rule of law, and that the right to human dignity was restored, provides cause for all us to count our blessings.

You would also be aware that millions of people now have access to basic services such as water, electricity, access to land and housing that they did not have before. 7 million children now receive the child support grant. A total of 10 million of our citizens receive social grants. As President Thabo Mbeki said during the State of the Nation Address on the 3rd February 2006, Millions did indeed in time and, in action, define ours as a shared destiny of peace, democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism, shared destiny and a better life for all.

As the President said, our people are firmly convinced that our country has entered its age of Hope. They are convinced that we have created the conditions to achieve more rapid progress towards the realisation of their dream.

We say this not to gloat, but because we realise that an extremely important aspect of boosting the nation's Moral Regeneration campaign is that of working in partnership with the church to improve the quality of the lives of our people and to eradicate poverty, disease and suffering left by the legacy of apartheid.

Let me reiterate that in the second decade of freedom, we need to continue spreading the messages that it is wrong to kill, rape or maim. That domestic violence and child abuse cannot be allowed to continue, and that we need to build strong foundations on which to raise our children to become caring, loving adults who know the difference between right and wrong.

It is in this context, that government has in partnership with the South African Council of Churches and other civil and business organisations launched a campaign for the drawing up the Moral Charter which will provide moral principles that will act as guidelines for our nation. If we abide by these principles, and raise our children correctly, we will be producing responsible citizens for this country.

We know as government and as the ANC that we can rely on the church in general and on the African Independent Churches in particular, to help us take this campaign forward, given the strong cultural and traditional values of ubuntu that the churches espouse.

If we vigorously promote that ubuntu in all suburbs, townships and villages, and isolate izinswelaboya (hooligans) who disrupt our communities, we will be one step towards building a caring society, and there would be fewer households whose occupants live in fear and apprehension.

Throughout the 94 years of unbroken struggle for a better life for our people led by the ANC, we have always maintained that the conscious and organised masses of all our people have been and must continue to be the makers of their history.

We therefore call on the church to mobilise its constituency to assume its rightful role in strengthening our democratic system of governance by participating in the March 1st Local Government Elections.

We all have a civic duty, to sustain local democracy by electing leaders of our own choice. When we said in the Freedom Charter, "The People Shall govern", we meant that the People will and must continue to be the guarantors of our freedom and democratic governance.

Your vote in the forthcoming elections is the mandate we need to give new content to our Age of Hope. Your vote is the mandate that we need to implement our plan to strengthen local government. It is the mandate we need use our experience to

improve the delivery of services and move faster to address the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation confronting those caught within the Second Economy, to ensure that the poor in our country share in our growing prosperity.

Brothers and sisters, thank you for inviting me to share this service with you. I wish you all the best in continuing with the work of the Lord.

We trust that we will continue working together to make further advances in the second decade of our democracy to build a better life for all in our country.

God Bless.

Morena a le tshegofatse

Ke a leboga.