

ADDRESS BY LIMPOPO MEC FOR EDUCATION ISHMAEL KGETJEPE AT THE MATRIC FAREWELL FUNCTION HELD AT UPON THE ROCK MINISTRIES, MOHLALETSE, 16 OCTOBER 2016

Programme Director

Bishop Matsimela and the executive of the church

Parents

Our distinguished learners

Esteemed guests

All congregants

I wish to greet everyone in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is beyond a pleasure that we meet again, not to mention what an honour it is to be here with all of you, pioneering a common cause of singing a chorus of motivation and encouragement to the class of 2016. Before I go any further, let me express my sincere gratitude to the leadership of the church for allowing us a platform as government to be here with you. We feel so encouraged that we have partners such as this church who we can count on as we lead the revolution to deliver accessible and quality education in the province. Indeed together we can educate the nation.

I say this because the church community in our society is not only a spiritual and moral force but it is also an important social institution, contributing to the development and well-being of people as a whole. If the church is taking this much interest through this function and other programmes, in the education of learners from this community, we expect parents to take much more interest in the education of their children. I am also hopeful that with this kind of support in this community and other communities where our

social partners have landed a helping hand in terms of providing motivational talks, we can do better in our results.

Last year we met on the 18th of October, for this noble purpose of giving words of strength to the then class of 2015. It shows that this is a church that values its children equally and we again gather to say prayers and give words of motivation to our current grade 12 learners who will be sitting for their National Senior Certificate final examinations in a week's time. Oliver Tambo once said: **“The children of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, a person that does not value its youth and children does not deserve its future”**.

Today's activities are our efforts aimed at preparing our children for a better future. As older people who have written various exams before, we know that our children need all the assistance. Its final exams, so you can imagine how nerve wrecking it can be for our children as the moment of truth is very much upon them. There can be no better place to calm nerves than in the House of the Lord and that's why I am happy to be with you today as one of your invited guests on this important occasion of the matric farewell.

We must continue to work with our churches across the province to improve the quality of education and learner outcomes. We have seen in the recent past, in Vuwani particularly, churches organising themselves, speaking with one voice when teaching and learning was under severe siege. We have seen churches organising prayer sessions and motivational talks as we battled to normalise schooling in that part of our province.

We have seen last year and this year again, this church, Upon the Rock Ministries, organising motivational speakers to encourage our learners ahead of final NSC examinations. The church, like all other institutions of civil society, must help in the quest of building a society through the provision of quality education. We note with great pleasure the important

role that churches all over the province play in the moulding and nurturing young minds of our learners into minds of responsibility.

It is our collective desire as leaders and I believe it is the heartfelt desire of everyone gathered here to wish the church well and hope that with each year, the church will continue to achieve its objectives of laying down a solid foundation in order to turn out well educated and disciplined citizens who will play prominent roles in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of our dear society. We sincerely thank the church for this yearly initiative.

Talking and interacting with the youth, you establish a number of concerns that are centred on among others, funding for education, unemployment, alcohol and drugs, discrimination, pregnancy and sexual transmitted diseases, poverty, relationships, school problems. These fears may show up in many ways that may be less obvious such as difficulty in concentration and sleeping. We know that a mind of a young person is the most vulnerable part of their whole being. It is very receptive and can easily be influenced.

In these situations we count on our churches because the bible implores us to protect the young ones' minds. We know that our children in today's technology savvy world are bombarded by different sounds and images and we believe there is a lot the church can do to help us address these concerns.

In essence this is what government expects of all stakeholders in society, that each social partner must make a contribution towards the achievement of quality education which will ultimately lead us to the achievement of our shared vision. Today, demonstrates that together with our church leaders, we view that the children of this community deserve better. This contribution says to us that the church and its community firmly believe that indeed

education is a societal matter and quality education is the foundation for human capital development.

On the 04th of October, we successfully launched in Vuwani, the Last Push Matric Programme, counting down to the 2016 final exams, to drum up support that will see every community stakeholder rallying behind 110 557 registered candidates before and during the examinations. One of the reasons we took the launch to Vuwani, in the Vhembe district, was because of the catastrophic events that saw teaching and learning disrupted for several months. Otherwise we would have launched this programme in districts that perform badly, like Waterberg and Sekhukhune. These are the two districts that registered massive declines in our 2015 results and we have been working around the clock to address this trend. Sekhukhune still leads in terms of the number of candidates who will sit for the 2016. It has 24 115 learners, an increase by 2 285. Let me state that quality remains a target that we should always work towards. We want everybody to know that this situation is not pleasing and it cannot continue unabated.

We are here to bid our learners' farewell, motivate and pray for them ahead of their examinations. I would like therefore to turn my attention to our beloved learners and say it is that time of the year. We applaud you for having made it this far. The time has come and there no avoiding it or a way around it. The only way is to go through it, face it head on and overcome. Whenever I have an opportunity to interact with learners, I always motivate them by telling them the reality that **“He who works like a slave, eats like a king”** and I do not stop there, I further tell them that **“Before every success comes pain”** because you do not inherit success, but you work hard for it. I am not sure how hard you have worked in preparation for your examinations. That question can be best answered by each one of you here. As we motivate here today, we must also highlight to you that hard work means hard work and there is no substitute for it.

As Christians, let me remind you what the book of James says about faith: it says that **“Faith without works is dead”**. Praying alone without studying hard will not yield anything for you. We motivate you to befriend your books and we can assure you that sooner or later your hard work will pay off and all the hardships will be forgotten.

As you graduate from your various schools, many will be confronted with profound choices that will determine your future role in society and most importantly your contribution to the development of South Africa, its people and the economy. The question is: are you ready to pass the 2016 examinations in a manner that will guarantee you bursaries and scholarships when we announce the results in January 2017. If you pass well, take it from me, various companies will be vying for your signature for you to pursue your studies wherever you have applied. If you work hard and get that bursary, you will be relieving your families of the burden of looking for money, which is not even there sometimes, to pay for your studies. The ball is very much in your court. Please make these remaining days count.

What I am asking you is to be different. And being different means not being afraid to challenge the norm, being willing to take a chance, making your own track, not just following the well-trodden path, charting your own course and destiny. With the remaining time, continue to be different and do not be afraid to give names that suggest that you are uncool. I want to say with all this support, from the church, the department, dedicated teachers, and supportive parents, none of this support will matter unless all of you continue to fulfil your responsibilities as learners.

Every single one of you has something you are good at and no matter what you want to do with your life, I guarantee that you will need an education to do it. You want to be a doctor, a teacher, an engineer, a nurse, a lawyer, an architect, you first have to pass grade 12. Doors of opportunities will all of a sudden open for you. This is one important push and step for you to become

anything you want to be. You have to work for it and train for it and learn for it. What you make of your education will decide nothing less than the future of this country.

I know it is not always easy and that is why we are on your behalf calling on everybody to support you in these important times of your academic life so that you do well in your examinations. I know a lot of you have challenges in your lives that can make it hard to focus on your school work but please there can be no excuse for dropping out of school when you have this kind of support in this community. My beloved learners, there is no excuse for not trying. Please, note that where you are right now does not have to determine where you will end up. Write your own destiny. Remember that you make your own future.

Even when you are struggling, even when you are discouraged and you feel like other people have given up on you, do not give up on yourself. Because when you give up on yourself, you have given up on your country.

I ask of you, what will be your contribution be? Your families, the church, your teachers, your business community and the department, have been doing and are still doing everything for you to achieve. We are working hard to get all that you need to learn. If that is our part, we ask you to do your part too. Get serious and put your best effort in everything you do in the remaining time. We expect great things from each of you. So do not let us down, do not let your family or your country or yourself down because the pain will be too much to fathom. We know you can do it. Make us all proud.

We thank the church for the unwavering support and prayers to our learners. We request you to continue to rally side by side with us to deliver quality education to all our children. I wish to thank all the schools and teachers involved in the farewell and the hosting church for your commitment and

dedication. We have difficult days ahead and we must not despair for our children need us more than ever.

On behalf of government, I wish you well and hope you will be matured enough to realize that this community will be poorer without you. Through the efforts of people like you, our communities will stop to be the reservoirs of cheap and unskilled labour and begin to be the havens of skills and expertise. Through you, this community will be a much better place.

Thank you all. I wish you the best of luck!

Together we move South Africa forward!

God bless!