

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE 07TH ANNUAL
CONVENTION OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA,
NORTHERN SYNOD, BELA-BELA MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE, WATERBERG DISTRICT

10 MAY 2026

Programme Director,
Leadership of the United Reformed Church of Southern Africa, Northern Synod,
Executive Mayor of Waterberg District, Cllr Jack Maeko,
Mayor of Bela-Bela Local Municipality, Cllr Gloria Modiegi Seleka,
Local Councillors,
Congregants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Good Morning, Goeie More,

There are moments in the life of a people when heaven seems to descend gently upon the earth, moments when faith rises above fear, when hope speaks louder than despair and when humanity is reminded of the presence and grace of God.

Today is one such moment. We gather in this sacred convention not only to worship, but to reaffirm our collective calling as servants of God and builders of a compassionate society.

Like rivers flowing from different mountains yet finding one course, we come from different backgrounds, languages and histories, but are united by one purpose and one God who reveals mysteries beyond human understanding.

Programme Director, this gathering has become an important spiritual platform as it unites members of the Synod across five provinces — Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, North West and parts of the Free State who have joined us today.

As the Limpopo Provincial Government, we join the multitudes in celebrating this remarkable seven years anniversary journey and rich history of the United Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The formation of this church in 1994 through the union of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa was not merely an administrative process, but it was a courageous spiritual declaration of unity, reconciliation and justice.

For the past 32 years, this church has remained a symbol of that unity. This achievement must never be taken lightly. In a society that continues to battle division, intolerance and polarisation, this church must continue to stand as a beacon of hope and an example for society to emulate. Your unity speaks louder than words. It reminds all of us that South Africa can only prosper when its people work together across racial, cultural and social lines.

As we assemble under the powerful theme drawn from Daniel 2:28, “There is a God in heaven who can reveal mysteries,” we are reminded that even during uncertain times, God remains firmly in control. He is the God who reveals light in darkness, direction in confusion and possibility where humanity sees impossibility. In a world weighed down by war, poverty, unemployment, crime, moral decay and inequality, this message speaks directly to the soul of humanity. It reassures us that no challenge is greater than the wisdom and power of Almighty God.

Programme Director, we also commend the church for its continued advocacy on issues of justice, equality and human dignity, particularly its commitment towards addressing gender-related challenges within both the church and society. The church has consistently spoken against patriarchy, discrimination and all forms of oppression that undermine the dignity of women.

As government, we remain deeply concerned about the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide that continues to destroy families and communities across our country. Women and children continue to live in fear, while many suffer abuse in silence. This cannot become normal in our society.

However, government alone cannot win this battle against social ills without the partnership of the church. The church is embedded within communities. The church understands the pain of families. The church shapes values, morals and behaviour. Long before government officials arrive, pastors and spiritual leaders are already present within communities comforting the grieving, guiding the youth and restoring broken families.

This is why the partnership between government and the church remains critical in building a better society. Government may provide policies, programmes and resources, but the church provides moral direction, spiritual guidance and social healing. Together, we can confront poverty, crime, substance abuse, family disintegration and violence. As the provincial government, we continue to work towards improving the lives of our people, we recognise the important role played by faith-based organisations in advancing social cohesion and nation-building.

Programme Director,

As we reflect on the condition of the world today, we cannot ignore the devastating geopolitical conflicts affecting millions across the globe. Wars, political instability and economic crises continue to deepen suffering, especially among the poor and vulnerable. When conflict erupts, it is ordinary people who suffer the most. The poor lose livelihoods, families lose security and communities lose hope.

During such difficult moments, the church must rise and become the conscience of humanity. The church must pray for peace among nations, reconciliation among leaders and healing among communities. The church must remind the world that peace cannot be achieved through hatred and violence, but through justice, compassion and dialogue.

Indeed, this is where the theme of this convention becomes profoundly relevant: “There is a God in heaven who can reveal mysteries.” God can reveal solutions where humanity sees dead ends. God can reveal wisdom to leaders and hope to nations. God can change situations that appear impossible and restore peace where there is conflict.

As we continue building a democratic and participatory society, let me also encourage all congregants and communities represented here today to exercise their constitutional right to go vote during the upcoming Local Government Elections scheduled for 04 November 2026, as proclaimed by the President of the Republic. Voting remains one of the most powerful instruments through which citizens can shape the future of their communities and strengthen our democracy.

Let us all go out in numbers and participate peacefully and responsibly in this important democratic process, because a strong democracy requires active citizens and united communities.

May this convention strengthen your faith, renew your unity and deepen your commitment to serving humanity. May this gathering inspire the church to continue becoming a voice for the voiceless, a refuge for the vulnerable and a pillar of hope within society.

May God bless this convention.

May God bless the church.

I thank you.