

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE VISIT
TO AGAPE CITY, TSHIVHAZWAULU, MAKHADO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY,
VHEMBE DISTRICT

11 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,
Apostle Azwihangwisi Elijah Mauna,
Prophetess Mashudu Selina Mauna,
Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Miyelani Chauke,
Mayor of Makhado Local Municipality, Cllr Dorcus Mmboyi,
Councillors,
Traditional Leaders,
Faith-Based Leaders,
Leadership of Agape City,
Distinguished Guests,
Beloved Congregants,

Ndi matsheloni, Thobela, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goeie môre!

It is a privilege to stand before you today in a house where faith finds expression, hope is restored, and lives are transformed.

When we enter the doors of a place of worship, we bring more than our physical presence. We bring our burdens, our prayers, our fears, our gratitude and our hopes for a better tomorrow. We come seeking strength

for the battles we face and reassurance that, even in our darkest moments, we are never alone.

Here at Agape City, in Tshivhazwaulu, faith is not merely spoken from the pulpit; it is demonstrated through acts of compassion, service and love. This is what makes a church truly great: not only the number of people who gather within its walls, but the number of lives that are touched beyond them.

Programme Director, standing here today, we recognise a remarkable journey of faith. What began in 1992 as the African Gospel Church grew into what we know today as Agape City, following its historic transition in 2010. Under the leadership of Apostle Azwihangwisi Elijah Mauna and Prophetess Mashudu Selina Mauna, this institution has become a spiritual home for many and a beacon of hope in our communities.

Indeed, Agape City stands for new beginnings and liberty. It reminds us that no matter how difficult yesterday may have been, tomorrow can bring renewed hope, restored dignity and another opportunity to rise.

As the Limpopo Provincial Government, we commend the leadership and congregation of Agape City for understanding that the mission of the church does not end at the sanctuary door.

We appreciate your efforts to support underprivileged students, provide houses for disadvantaged families and distribute food parcels to those experiencing hardship. These are not merely charitable activities; they are practical expressions of love that restore dignity and change lives.

When you help a child access education, you invest in a future that poverty might otherwise have denied. When you provide a vulnerable family with a home, you offer more than shelter; you give them security and a place to rebuild their lives. When you feed a hungry person, you remind them that they have not been forgotten.

This is the gospel in action. As Christ teaches in John 21:17, we are called to care for His sheep. Agape City is demonstrating what it means to turn this teaching into meaningful action.

Programme Director, this brings us to the important relationship between government and the church. We may have different responsibilities, but we share a common concern: the well-being of our people.

Government must deliver services, expand opportunities and create conditions for communities to prosper. The church contributes by nurturing moral values, offering spiritual support and mobilising people to care for one another.

When government and faith-based institutions work together, our communities stand a better chance of overcoming poverty, hopelessness and social challenges. We cannot build a prosperous society with infrastructure alone; we must also build people, strengthen families and restore the values that hold our communities together.

This responsibility has become even more urgent as we confront gender-based violence and femicide. Our country continues to face the painful reality of women and children being abused, violated and murdered. This is a crisis that demands action from every sector of society, including the church.

Our pulpits must teach respect, equality and accountability. We must never allow religious authority to become a shield for abuse, nor should we remain silent when allegations of violence involve someone within our own communities.

There can be no justification for abuse, and there must be no hiding place for perpetrators behind the name of God. Let our churches become safe spaces where survivors are believed, supported and guided towards appropriate assistance.

We must also invest in the moral regeneration of our young people. Our youth face unemployment, substance abuse, peer pressure and the emotional challenges of navigating a rapidly changing world. They need more than criticism; they need guidance, mentorship, opportunities and people who believe in their potential.

Programme Director, our faith must also be reflected in how we participate in the life of our communities. As we approach the municipal elections scheduled for 4 November 2026, every eligible voter should take the opportunity to participate in this important democratic process.

Local government decisions affect the roads we travel, the water we use, the waste removed from our neighbourhoods and the services our families depend on. Participation gives citizens an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights and contribute to shaping their communities' future.

I therefore encourage every eligible congregant to verify their voting arrangements, participate peacefully and make an informed choice. Let us exercise our rights responsibly and remain active citizens beyond election day.

As I conclude, I return to the meaning of this gathering. A church is not measured only by the beauty of its buildings, but by the compassion of its people. Its greatest testimony is found in the hungry who are fed, the vulnerable who are protected, the young who are guided and the broken-hearted who find renewed hope.

To Apostle Mauna, Prophetess Mauna and the entire Agape City family, thank you for your contribution to the lives of our people and the development of the Vhembe District.

May this sanctuary continue to be a place where faith inspires action, love overcomes indifference and hope rises above despair.

Thank you. Ndi a livhuwa. Na khensa, Ke a leboga.