ADDRESS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR CYRIL XABA AT THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA CONFERENCE, 10 OCTOBER

- Programme director
- Circuit Superintendent: Rev. M. Ggeba
- Ward Councillor: Mr. K. Mbhele
- Members of the Church
- Delegates
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening. Sanibona.

On this important occasion, the United Methodist Church Women's Manyano Gala Dinner, we are pleased to join you this evening. On behalf of the people of eThekwini Municipality, we would like to extend the warmest welcome to all the delegates.

Themed: "Religion and Rehabilitation as Moral Reform," this gathering is a reminder of the important role the church plays in offering guidance,

fostering social justice, and providing care to the most vulnerable in our communities.

Historically, the church served as a critical refuge for those who were persecuted by the brutal apartheid government. The church was also key in galvanising society to come together to usher in a new transition which brought us a democratic and inclusive government.

However, we know that today, we face different challenges – we ask the church to, once again, lead in the fight against social ills which threaten the stability of the family structure – sinking our society deeper into drug and alcohol abuse.

Therefore, as the leadership of eThekwini Municipality, we understand that the moral regeneration effort that the government is spearheading will not succeed without the church's contribution, particularly uManyano. We must continue to strengthen collaboration between government and women-led formations to develop meaningful interventions that will help rebuild our society.

Recently, we have seen churches, with women at the forefront, extending a helping hand by providing much-needed humanitarian aid to victims of disasters that have visited the city. The donation of food, clothes and other essential goods provided relief to many people who were left homeless and found themselves in community halls and other facilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, the essence of utilizing Religion and Rehabilitation as Moral Reform is when we get involved in the fight against crime, violence, substance abuse and Gender-Based Violence crippling our communities. When we become community activists, we have a better chance of achieving moral reform that is required to build a peaceful and prosperous nation.

On our part as the municipality, we continue to work with community structures that include interfaith structures, academia, business, and civic organisations to find solutions to many challenges we face as a city.

It is important to stress that as government, we understand that we cannot defeat the social ills ravaging our communities alone. We believe the church should be in the forefront in building social cohesion between

different communities which will ensure that we build a strong and united nation.

That is why we would like to call on the church to walk with us on this journey of bringing hope where there is despair. We rely on the church to provide spiritual guidance and offer comfort to those who are in distress.

As a caring government we have established a wide range of programmes that support young people achieve their dreams of contributing positively to the growth of this country. For example, we are attracting young people through various skills development programmes where graduates do in-service training, apprenticeship and learnerships.

In conclusion, we want to take this opportunity to convey our sincere appreciation for the invitation and wish you a successful gathering. Again, on behalf of the people of eThekwini, we wish the United Methodist Church of Southern Africa growth and success. We remain committed to work together to rebuild and reform our society through the word of God.

I thank you