



**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE SEDIBENG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY
EXECUTIVE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR MAHOLE SIMON
MOFOKENG ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2009 INTERFAITH
PRAYER SESSION**

19 March 2009.

- Programme Director, Rev. Christina Sale,
- Bishop Jeffrey Lease, of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,
- Mathole Motshekga, ANC Member of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature and Member of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress,
- Khabisi Mosunkutu, ANC Member of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature and Member of the Provincial Executive Committee of the ANC;
- Alinah Rantsolase, Treasurer of COSATU,

- Fellow Councillors, MPs and MPLs;
- Leaders of various of various religious groups,
- Gogo Thobeka, Convenor of the tradition healers in the Gauteng province,
- Ladies and gentlemen;
- The people of Gauteng;

On behalf of all who hold Office in the Sedibeng District Municipality and its three Local Municipalities of Emfuleni, Midvaal and Lesedi, I greet and welcome each of you to the 2009 Interfaith Prayer Service.

With elections date just 34 days away from today; all of us, Religious people, professionals, and business bodies must work hard towards deepening and advancing elections work - with and for the poor, homelessness, landless and workers.

As in the true purpose of the Religious faith, it is our duty and responsibility to join in prayer for elections to be as peaceful as the previous ones since 1994,

and for our president-hopeful and the new political leadership, to hit the ground running in instituting the changes mentioned in the election manifesto.

As we approach the elections date, it is important that we also pray for an end to the spate of senseless killings of our councillors in Mpumalanga, North West and KwaZulu Natal. At the same time, we must expose and refuse temptations and confusions by those who are masquerading as religious leaders – in search of our votes.

In two days time, South Africans will be commemorating the 21st March 1960 massacre, and the subsequent banning of organizations and individual leaders and activists. These barbarous acts, 49 years ago, signaled the beginning of the new era in the South African history – an era in which repression and conflict were to reach their peak; and an era we must not wish for in the history of mankind.

It is the nightmares and thoughts of that era of extreme national oppression, supper exploitation and increased

attacks on the rights of black countrymen and women, which should guide us in the polling booths. For it was an era reminiscent of that of the Israelites, who were slaves for 40 years, which Religious people the world-over should pray that it never befalls any nation again.

That is the context in which we understand this noble Prayer Session.

Fellow Religious brothers and sisters, I welcome each of you to the 2009 Interfaith Prayer Session, which takes place in Wilberforce in Sedibeng. Wilberforce has a proud history in our struggle of freedom and democracy. Home to Mme Charlotte Maxeke, a fabulous woman and mother of African freedom in our Country, it is also known for having produced a great number of freedom fighters, cadres and volunteers in our National Democratic Revolution.

Our selection therefore makes this historic place a perfect venue for our Prayer Session, which turns it to a fitting tribute to all the victims of the Sharpeville massacre

We should openly and honestly take to heart the sufferings of our people. It is going to be important for the Christian community, immediately after the elections, to honestly work and assist government.

It must centrally be about the transformational challenges we face. For instance, we need to get a clear picture of the extent to which government is pursuing the developmental and caring society agenda, honouring the pledge we have made in Polokoane, including availing land on which communities, landless and poor must build places of worship.

Our prayers today must go far beyond the Vaal and Kliprivier. They must be heard in the corridors of power in Sedibeng District Municipality, Midvaal Local Municipality, Gauteng Provincial and National Legislatures.

Brothers and sisters, I want to use this opportunity to extend an invitation to all of you to join this afternoon at the Memorial Lecture and on Saturday at Human Rights Rally, both of which are dedicated to commemorate the Sharpeville massacre and celebrate Human Rights in our Country.

Amandla,

Matla,

I thank you.