

Renaming of Meadowlands street

15 September 2009

Speech by Clr Amos Masondo, Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, on the occasion of the renaming of Vincent Street in honour of Reverend Frederick S Modise, Meadowlands, Soweto, Johannesburg.

Programme Director

The Comforter, His Grace Reverend MG Modise

MMC for Development Planning and Urban Management, Clr Ros Greeff

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

Executives and members of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Members of the Community

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, today we celebrate the life and legacy of His Grace, Reverend Frederick Modise, the founder of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC). From a humble beginning, he developed, what has become today, one of the fastest growing churches in Southern Africa. Many will agree that the IPHC is a beacon of hope, a centre charity and healing.

Reverend Modise was born in Rooiberg in 1914 and brought up near Bela Bela (Warmbaths) in Hammanskraal. He then left and moved on to Johannesburg at a young age. He first lived at Vrededorp and later, after the forced removals, settled here at No 1 Vincent Street – the street we are today naming after him.

He married his beloved wife, Bertha and seven children were born from this union. He started a modest business manufacturing framing pictures that eventually grew into the well-known Blue Bird Furnishers, making bedroom and dining room suites as well as school furniture.

What is the moral of the story? He extolled the virtue of work and by his action sought to promote a good work ethic.

In the late fifties and early sixties, he suffered from severe illness which caused him to be hospitalised on a number of occasions. It is reported that it was during one such incident in

September 1962 that he received divine healing but also a calling to start a ministry that extended his gift of healing to other people.

In the early years, the services were held at his home in 1 Vincent Street. As the numbers grew, the church had to move to bigger premises. The first IPHC institution was built in Zone 10 Meadowlands and most of us are also familiar with similar facilities at the City of Silo (Western Area) and the City of Jerusalem at Oskraal north of Tshwane.

What is the moral of the story? He never looked forward to sudden results but sound organisational work - God willing.

His Grace, Comforter Modise passed away in 1998 and was succeeded by his son, Comforter MG Modise. Today the Church has 360 branches throughout South Africa with an active membership of more than 2,9 million people.

Given its influence and impact on society, it is no coincidence that our country's President, Jacob Zuma, decided to celebrate Easter Sunday earlier this year with members of the International Pentecostal Holiness congregation.

As a city, we also honour and appreciate the contribution the church is making in welfare and job creation projects as well as its strong emphasis on issues of morality - especially with regards to the youth.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the lesser known facts about Moemedi is that it was he who discovered the talents of one of South Africa's most celebrated artists, Yvonne Chaka Chaka. In a recent media interview, Ms Chaka Chaka-Mhinga herself recounted how Ntate Modise predicted in 1982 that she "would travel the world and sing for kings and queens." The rest, as they say, is history. This he did not only to Yvonne but was able to help many others...

What is the moral of the story? That good leaders identify potential and reproduce themselves. They develop and nurture others...

Programme Director, the City does not take decisions on the naming and renaming of streets or public spaces lightly. Through the years the City has developed a policy on naming and renaming that is the product of extensive consultation.

With regards to renaming decisions, the Council decided it will only be done where compelling argument is presented that indicate existing names might be offensive or historically irrelevant or that the name change is desirable to promote goodwill among all the people of our city.

The City has implemented this process in a very responsible and consultative manner. In recent years, we have renamed streets and parks to honour some of the outstanding individuals in the City and in our country: Chris Hani, Joe Slovo, Elias Motsoaledi, Bram Fischer, Elmon Malele, Dorothy Nyembe, Albertina Sisulu and Beyers Naude – heroes and heroines of our national democratic struggle – a struggle for justice.

Looking back I think most people would agree that these changes reflect the broad diversity of the people who shaped the destiny of our city and country. That this promotes nation-building and unity. That this gives ordinary people a stake in our past, the present and the future.

In the case of the Reverend Frederick S Modise Drive, the Council received submissions from the International Pentecost Church with detailed motivation explaining why the founder of the church should be so honoured. This was then subjected to a public participation process and eventually got approved by Council earlier this year.

At the same meeting it was also decided that other streets in Soweto would be renamed to commemorate the June 16, 1976 uprising. Mphuti Street in Central West Jabavu, Machaba Drive and Mahalefele and Pela streets in Mofolo are among those that will be changed.

Programme Director, this month of September is a period in which we, as South Africans, celebrate heritage month. This is an opportunity to reflect on our history, our rich cultural diversity as well as to dedicate ourselves to the building of an inclusive and caring society.

The renaming of streets is one of the symbolic ways in which we can achieve this – but this alone cannot be enough. We can only truly celebrate our heritage if we take decisive steps to correct the wrongs of the past and to commit ourselves fully to the social and economic upliftment of all our people.

That is why social development, job creation, the eradication of poverty, the provision of services to all our people, housing, health services and education, will remain the central pillars of the work we do in government.

I trust that the next time you go along the Rev Frederick S. Modise Drive, you will not only remember the memory of his greatness, but that you will also be inspired to make a positive contribution.

Let us together build Johannesburg into a World Class African City. Your contribution and that of your community will make a difference.

I thank you.