

**PRAYER MEETING FOR
THE JIMMY CARTER HABITAT FOR HUMANITY BLITZ BUILD**

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY
MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, MP
CHAIRMAN, THE HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS (KWAZULU NATAL)
MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS AND
PRESIDENT, THE INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY**

**UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, BEATRICE STREET, DURBAN
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On behalf of the people of South Africa and its Government I wish to express our pleasure on hosting Jimmy Carter Habitat for Humanity Blitz Build, and meeting with its participants in this prayer meeting. I am certain that my colleague the Minister of Housing, has extended a formal welcome to our guests of honour. I thank the Rev BK Dlodla for allowing me to share in extending this welcome.

I welcome the opportunity to join this congregation of workers and visionaries in gathering to pray for the success of the Jimmy Carter Habitat for Humanity Blitz Build. It is a pleasure to lend my support to this project. As a Christian and a leader among some of South Africa's poorest and most needy communities, I appreciate wholeheartedly the work being accomplished by Habitat for Humanity. Its world-wide and long-term success speaks of its value, necessity and importance for communities of every nation. With billions among the world's population living below the breadline, homelessness and sub-standard housing are global issues demanding our full attention.

I am proud to see former US President Jimmy Carter's name associated with this worthy project. It is right and fitting that a peacemaker and man of God such as the former President, should lend himself to this cause. I recall when I first met President Carter in 1979 when he welcomed me into the Oval office. From that first meeting his solid good character has left a lasting impression on me. His was an illustrious presidency and in all the years since his term of office, he has continued to add lustre to every humanitarian effort he pursued. His dedication to serve humanity and promote peace has extended to fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa and giving great contributions towards basic human rights' projects.

At the same time, I applaud the involvement of His Excellency, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, in this Jimmy Carter Habitat for Humanity Blitz Build Project. President Kaunda and the people of Zambia paid a very high price for our liberation struggle, more than any other country in Southern Africa. I actually went to Lusaka in the 70's to pay my respects to President Kaunda and to express our thanks to him and our people in the Republic of Zambia for the great sacrifices that Zambia paid for our liberation.

Like President Jimmy Carter, President Kenneth Kaunda is a devout Christian and those of us who are Believers know that apart from being our African brother, we are bonded with him through the blood of Christ that was shed for us, in the same

way as is the case with President Carter. Another brother and friend of Africa through whom I knew about this service, is the Reverend Gunter Kaiser, who is an old friend of Africa and also a personal friend of both the Reverend BK Dlodla, as well as my personal friend. He also did a great deal for us in Southern Africa during our liberation struggle in publicising the vagaries of the apartheid system. I am not surprised therefore by his continuing interest in doing something practical in our struggle against poverty and homelessness. He is also very welcome, here as much as his daughter.

With the support of leaders of the calibre of Jimmy Carter, Habitat for Humanity cannot but succeed. I see within this initiative values for which I have stood my whole life, and I understand why visionary men and women so readily take up this challenge and run with it. Habitat for Humanity is a fulgent example of the spirit of self-help and self-reliance which I have advocated for almost half a century among communities of South Africa. It is a privilege to join with those who are spreading this message and building tangible evidence of its relevance, to pray for the work that lies ahead. My own life in leadership has taught me the valuable connection between work and prayer.

I am privileged to be here with these great leaders and brothers in Christ to join this congregation in corporate worship and thanksgiving.

Work and prayer are not separate pursuits. Our work must begin in prayer, enfolded in prayer and completed in prayer. As the Habitat for Humanity team meets today to do just that, I join my faith in believing that goals shall be met, obstacles shall be overcome and needs will be fulfilled. In doing its work, this team has the opportunity to impact and even change the lives of those they help, on both a practical and spiritual level. Indeed, the practical work accomplished opens an avenue for spiritual contact. Why you do what you do, why it matters to you that people live in sub-standard houses, why you are willing to volunteer your time and talents, are questions that open the opportunity to share one's faith and to share the gospel of Christ.

I believe that what Habitat for Humanity is achieving is wonderful. This is visionary work. It is the beginning of mobilising communities for further victory even in other areas. Our victory over HIV/AIDS demands that we are able to mobilise people with sufficient hope, sufficient inspiration and a sufficient desire to become a part of the project against the spread of the disease. My own rallying call for a revolution of goodwill is based on the knowledge that unless we fight together, victory will elude the individual. I trust that the wisdom of experience and unique expertise of the Habitat for Humanity team will ignite a fire of community cohesiveness that will facilitate community victories in many fields.

With these words, it is my pleasure and privilege to greet you and wish you every success as the Blitz Build begins. On behalf of many of South Africa's poorest communities, I wish to express our gratitude. Indeed, in the face of such a worthwhile project, there is little to say but thank you and God bless you all.

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