

## **HONOURABLE PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

Fellow citizens of the beautiful Province of KwaZulu-Natal, we are now into that yearly season in the Christian calendar of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It is a season to mark the end of a year, and a move to the beginning of a new one.

This is the time when the majority of us, take time off our work to rest with our families and all our loved ones.

This has been a challenging year in a number of areas, but most importantly in the performance of our economy. As the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, I am proud of the work we have done as the Provincial Government in bettering the lives of the people.

Like the rest of our country, KwaZulu-Natal has had its fair share of challenges. We are a Province faced with various social and economic challenges. Among these is unemployment; social ills like substance abuse and violence against women, children and the elderly; high-prevalence of HIV/Aids and other chronic diseases; and under-development particularly in rural areas due to years of neglect.

Despite all this, we have been able to accelerate delivery of services required in making the lives of the people better. We have made progress in health, education, fighting crime and in improving the lives of people in rural areas. With our model of every district having its own champion at the Executive Council level, we have been able to sharpen focus in tackling backlogs in development. We still have a long way to go, and the road ahead will not be easy.

As we break for Christmas and all the festivities of celebrating this important day, we need to think of those who have gone through difficult and challenging experiences in 2014. Some of us lost their loved ones through road accidents, crime, illnesses and natural causes.

Others lost their jobs and thus their means of livelihood. Others may have seen all their plans and resolutions for the year fall apart. For others still, this has been their best year, wherein their dreams were realised.

Whatever our circumstance may have been, we must be grateful to our Creator for giving us life to this day. We must reflect on what we have been able to accomplish, despite any challenge we may have gone through.

As we celebrate this festive season, let us draw inspiration from the life of Jesus Christ, which is love and caring for others. He dedicated his life on earth to preach love and caring for others, especially those seen as not important in the eyes of the world. He taught, fed and healed the masses especially the marginalised. As we engage on various festivities, let us think of those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Through his life on earth, Jesus Christ taught us the importance of compassion.

For us in South Africa, God blessed us with the life and leadership of the late Nelson Mandela who is the founding father of the democratic South Africa. This is the first year since his passing. In him and his life, we continue to draw inspiration on the power of human spirit to overcome all forms of injustice and seek reconciliation with one another.

Although he had been born in our land and led the struggle for freedom in South Africa, in the process, he became an embodiment of what Ubuntu means. Through his life, we learn the value of caring for others, especially the marginalised. This is what Jesus Christ taught us, and the celebration of this day should thus be largely about that.

As George W Truett once said, "Christ was born in the first century, yet he belongs to all centuries. He was born a Jew, yet He belongs to all races. He was born in Bethlehem, yet He belongs to all countries."

I wish all of you a merry Christmas that is full of joy and happiness. Let us love one another and care for those less fortunate than us. To those who will be spending their festive break in our Province, we welcome you. We trust that the warmth of the people

of KwaZulu-Natal, will make this time enjoyable for you and make you wish to return to our beautiful land.

Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!