

Warm greetings! July and August were full of rich experiences, learning, growth, healing, beloved friendship connections, delightful weeks of summer in the USA, and cold, rainy, windy winter.

Gratitude for the highlights and prayers for the challenging times:

50th anniversary of Michael Lapsley's ordination as priest, in St George's Cathedral.

Tensions in Zwelihle when locals blamed foreigners for the death of a young woman, causing fear for some of our staff, while our local staff provided huge support.

Michael Battle's Tutu Travel Seminar group at Volmoed.

Course on leading retreats, in Maryland, USA, preceded by staying at Holy Cross Monastery, West Park, NY, described in haikus below.

Two weeks in Oregon & California to visit beloved friends and attend a funeral of a dear friend.

Tensions, protests, random stone throwing, in Hawston, Mount Pleasant, Zwelihle, amidst the taxi strike in Cape Town and surrounding areas, making travel on the N2 dangerous.

Taizé youth day at the Moravian church in District Six.

Launch of the Volmoed Covenant of Love, together with our new patrons, Mary Burton, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Lionel Louw; followed by the Volmoed AGM.

Farewell service and events for my friend and companion on the priest and ministry journey, Bishop Margaret Vertue, as she retired at the end of August.

VYLTP and Volmoed news in the links below, to the most recent reports for our fundraising partner organisation, Global Giving.

Please pray for our staff, who struggle with rising costs of food, fuel and electricity, and for Volmoed, as we are not currently able to increase their salaries as much as we want to. Winter is always a challenge, we pray for spring and summer to bring full houses of guests our way. Leana and Peterus have asked us for prayers for their families.

We continue our community prayers on Weds mornings, and story sharing. In the last month, Leana, Peterus, Dorothy and Vuyani have shared their stories. We always pray for them at the end. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Volmoed staff report: https://www.globalgiving.org/pfil/46841/Global_Giving_Volmoed_staff_report_Aug_2023.pdf

VYLTP report:

https://www.globalgiving.org/pfil/46847/GLobal_Giving_VYLTP_Report_Aug_2023.pdf

July began with a wonderful celebration of Michael Lapsley's 50th anniversary of ordination as priest, in St George's Cathedral. My month in the USA was in two parts. First, on the east coast, a few days at Holy Cross Monastery in midsummer with heat and humidity, a huge contrast to the mid-winter weather here. I needed a few days to get over jet lag and transition into summer. It included a swim in the Hudson River, catching up with Br Luc, Br Timothy, a lot of sleep, and the synchronicity of one of my small group members from the retreat course being at the monastery the very same week. I then caught up with long standing friends Peter Moll and Masami Kojima in Washington DC, before heading to Maryland for the course on 'Transforming Communities through individual and group retreats' or through contemplative practices, through the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation. This was a magnificent week in a beautiful retreat centre, Bon Secours (meaning 'good help').

The week was mostly experiential learning through seminars presented by Shalem Institute staff, a lot of prayer practices ranging from breath prayers as part of embodiment; praying with icons and pictures; listening to music as part of 'sound and silence'; working with Scripture and poetry for 'lectio divina' and drawing, painting for 'creativity'. My small peer group was one of the best ever, including a young mother environmental lawyer who grew up in Kenya, the young Episcopal priest who was at the monastery the week before as well, a retired doctor who bought a laundromat as a way of building community and a way to work with young people, and a teacher in a low income area. Each of us facilitated a spiritual practice with the group and then got feedback. Mine was 'sound and silence' and I used my native American flute combined with chanting the word 'shalom', as a bridge into sharing the Jesus prayer with them – which I have prayed as a spiritual practice for about thirty years now. Feedback was positive, as well as encouraging me not to play the low note on the flute as long as I did, as it distracted the doctor and the others by wondering how long I could hold my breath!

The week ended with a day and a half of silent retreat, which began with meeting with our prayer partners. During the silent time I kept on meeting up with my prayer partner in the spaces I felt drawn to pray in. I felt drawn to walking the labyrinth, which I had not done for a few years. I ended up in the centre at noon, just as the clock began to chime twelve times, and then played a familiar hymn tune that was very meaningful to me.

After the retreat I headed west for part 2, to Portland, Oregon and then California. I had the most marvelous time of reconnecting with long-standing friends I've known since seminary days in the mid 1980s, and others more recently. I was asked to preside at

the Sunday eucharist of my beloved church, All Saints Church Pasadena, on the Sunday they commemorated the 49th anniversary of the ordination of women priests in the Episcopal church – what an incredible and profoundly moving service. I was conscious that my priestly vocation was shaped and formed at All Saints Church and many Episcopal women priests. How special that I was able to be a part of this on the only Sunday I was in Pasadena!

Beloved friends like family are a treasure without measure. I was privileged to enjoy the company of many friends in favourite spaces. I returned home to jet lag that was harder than usual to overcome, sleeping only three to four hours a night for the first many days. Michael Battle and the Tutu Travel seminar were already at Volmoed, and I managed to play my usual part, sharing my ordination story and the story of gender/GBV in SA, as well as coordinating a Taizé style evening contemplative prayer service for the group.

I also coordinated the music and prayer services for the Taizé Youth Day at the Moravian Church in District Six, one of the few churches and mosques that were not demolished by the apartheid government. It was attended by about thirty five people, from Hermanus and Cape Town. There were workshops on drumming, GBV (gender based violence), and a history of District Six and forced removals from the area during apartheid, as experienced by the people in the Moravian church community. It was a wonderful day.

At Volmoed we held a special service to launch what is known as the Volmoed Covenant of Love, at a special service where our three new patrons, Mary Burton, Pumla Gobodo -Madikizela and Lionel Louw, offered their reflections, and met with the young people, and the Volmoed Council over lunch. This was followed by the Volmoed AGM.

The last weekend in August was marked by the special services and events for my friend Bishop Margaret Vertue. We have walked a long way together since we met at St Paul's College in 1988. Her farewell service in Stellenbosch was over three and a half hours long, which reflects all she has done and her legacy in the diocese, especially to empower and make women leaders and youth more visible. She laid down her staff (made by John de Gruchy) on the altar in Bredasdorp on 28 August, and the clergy gathered around her to pray for her. How moving this was. She has been my bishop in the diocese of False Bay since I came to Volmoed, what a gift she has been. I participated in her farewell service, what a privilege.

Thank you all for your love, prayers and support, for me and for Volmoed. We feel it and appreciate it!

Love,
Wilma





SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2023
The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Commemoration of the Ordination of the Philadelphia Eleven
Eucharist at 10:00 a.m.



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