

VOLMOED CHAPLAINS CORNER

As July begins we are well into the grip of a cold and rainy winter and I am grateful for one or two sunny days now and then.

The joy of my journey of leading retreats continues. At the beginning of June, I led ten clergy from the Anglican Rondebosch Archdeaconry in a five day silent retreat. This was a first for me, very challenging and rewarding to use the gifts and experience God has given and discover the mutuality of the journey. The theme was 'Come Holy Spirit! Grow our Compassion!' Despite the nonstop rain, from the topic to the sessions, the exercises, the music, it was deeply meaningful and challenging, and their feedback was affirming. I have another clergy silent retreat booked for October.



Following this retreat, the False Bay diocese Fellowship of Vocation facilitated a weekend retreat for those discerning a call to ordination. It was the first time that they came to Volmoed and I was able to shepherd them around the place, yes in the continuing rain, and join them for meals and some good conversations.

Our VYLTP drum making project continues, as the drum making factory now operates out of the church hall of All Saints Church in Zwelihle. We made it into the local newspaper and now three local restaurants are providing meals every couple of weeks. A small group went to drum at Benguela Cove at an event for entrepreneur NGOs attended by the National Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia de Lille.



One of our cohort, Lutho Nyatela, left for the Taizé Community in France, where he will be a volunteer for three months. This is a huge opportunity for him and continues the practice of sending young people in this way, for the first time since Covid-19 times. Please pray for him.

Our Wednesday morning prayers that gather the Volmoed staff, residents, and the Benedictine brothers together, are a highlight for many of us. Each week one of the staff leads us in a song, short scripture in three languages and in our prayers. The second half of the gathering focuses on the sharing of stories. Someone shares their story of where they were before Volmoed, how they came to Volmoed and what Volmoed means to them, and then are prayed for at the end. Stories are translated into Afrikaans or English and Xhosa, as needed. This is



part of our process of discussing the Volmoed Covenant of Love, a draft document that begins to articulate the values and mission of Volmoed and our shared commitments. We are busy getting the document translated into Afrikaans and Xhosa, and will read a small section of the document each week along with the sharing of stories. This is a wonderful way of getting to know each other, and the stories are recorded and sent to those who were unable to attend. I am hoping it is a future Oral History research project in the making and am taking photos to assist that process one day.

The FynArts Festival was a highlight of the month, another rainy week in which Jane Keen, and two US friends, one from NY, the other from California, all visited. The keynote speaker was Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, founder of Gift of the Givers, and he was inspiring beyond measure. The work they do is incredible. This took place in a capacity filled Dutch Reformed Church and John de Gruchy introduced him. There will be follow up in Hermanus, which has enormous potential. I attended three music events, one with three women musicians playing music by women composers, based on Maya Angelou's poem, 'Phenomenal Women.' A jazz supper club with dinner and great music attended with my NY friend K, rounded off the week.



I am excited about the Shalem Institute course I am doing, 'Transforming Communities through Individual and Group Retreats.' It is a substantive course that is grounding me in what I need, so that I can move more fully into this area of leading retreats. There is a large amount of reading, a monthly online peer group meeting, three seminars, and two six day residencies in Maryland, USA. There is a workshop to do at the residency, with my peer group, and my topic is 'Sound and Silence.' Other topics include 'Nature', 'Embodiment', 'Sacred Text', 'Creativity' and 'External Images and Icons.' I will also have to create a six session course on Spiritual Practices from the above and other topics, and then do it with a group here. I leave for the USA on 10 July and will spend three days at Holy Cross Monastery, NY, to prepare for the residency and finish the reading. I will head to California for a couple of weeks after the residency, for some summer relief and catching up with friends, returning to Volmoed on 11 August.

I am aware of how privileged I am to live and minister at Volmoed, in this space, in diverse ways, and to be growing in this area of retreats. I am enormously grateful for all of it. Thank you always for your prayers and support.

Love
Wilma

