

## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Warm greetings! This year still feels new and yet much has already happened. The season of Lent has begun, so a Lenten prayer:

*Spirit of the Living God You drive us out into the desert where we can count on nothing but your grace. Drive us to our knees; teach us to trust; shape us into a people acceptable in your sight, O God our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen. (Paul Fayer)*

So many reasons to be driven to our knees – at Volmoed, a few of us have felt a nudge for many months to fast and pray for our beloved South Africa with all our joys, traumas and challenges; and more recently, for the Volmoed community as well., where challenges abound. We started on Ash Weds, to fast and pray on Wednesdays, with a drop-in vigil in the chapel, 12h20 – 13h00 that follows the brothers' *Diurnum* daily office of twenty minutes silence. People fast or not, as they can, and pray as and how they can. We are all invited to join, wherever you are at that time, or a time better suited for you. We all need God's grace and mercy, and expectantly pray that the Spirit continues to work with us at Volmoed, and that God raises up courageous leadership of integrity, wisdom, moral backbone and action at Volmoed and in SA. *O God hear our prayer, and let our cry come unto Thee.*



So many gifts of grace once more in 2023, it's been full and busy! I have connected with a number of groups who came to Volmoed, sharing my story, doing Taizé prayers and compline services, and just finished accompanying someone on a six day retreat and another couple on a four day retreat, which ended on Ash Weds with a renewal of their ordination and lay preaching vows. Simple and so special. I was at St Patrick's in Mount Pleasant for their evening Ash Weds service, which was full, by lamplight courtesy of loadshedding, and very special, a sense of God's love and beauty prevailed.

An unexpected gift was the World Vision Southern Africa Leadership retreat. Thirteen leaders, nine women among them, and I was asked to do one on one meetings with those who wanted



that. All the women took up the opportunity, and I met with nine strong, amazing African women leaders who do incredible work in countries from Zambia, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and SA, with enormous responsibilities, needing support. The highlight was the closing eucharist held at the beautiful grotto, a first ever for me, in the glorious cathedral of creation! Great thanks to Craig Stewart of World Vision International who led their retreat and invited me to be a part of it. I am hoping they return.



Our VYLTP annual planning meeting in January reminded us of all that is new and wasn't on our plan for last year, especially our new drumming program. We have now completed a training course for drum circle leadership and ten young people will graduate in March. They trained on Saturdays, then performed at the old

harbour amphitheatre on Sundays. Meanwhile a paying drum circle on Sat nights has helped to fund the overall costs. The group has drummed at some special occasions, including a Fire and Jam at Grotto beach with fire dancers and other drumming groups.

Also last week, they joined well known local pianist and poet, Lara





Kirsten (who had done a fundraising concert for Volmoed in January in the chapel), for a grand finale at her outdoor concert in the same venue used by the drummers. Improvisation with classical piano and drummers, a first for them all!

The young people are learning basic leadership skills along the way, and earn a small honorarium for lunch or to take home. Please pray for our next steps as we plan how to do the drum making workshop,

which takes us to another level, in finding ways for our young developing leaders to also earn some income. Bevil Spence of [www.drumba360.net](http://www.drumba360.net) has been a gift to us, and we look forward to what is to come. <https://volmoedyouth.org.za/the-volmoed-youth-drumming-project/>

Our Beloved Community workshop facilitated by the remarkable Seth Naicker brought ten young people to greater awareness of the dimensions of faith based and values driven leadership. A few of them attend the Volmoed Thursday eucharist on a regular basis and relationships are starting to develop between older and younger generations, across culture, language and race. Small steps, big gratitude!



Our Weds 8am Community prayers continue to bring great joy to us. With the visit of the Superior of the Priory, the brothers decided to push their 8am prayers of Lauds and Eucharist, to after our prayers, so they can join the Volmoed community in prayer. This is no small thing! I was very moved the first Weds we all sat in the chapel as the different communities of Volmoed – farm staff, office staff, residents and the brothers, praying together in silence and in different languages. Everyone takes a turn to lead and to read the Scripture is in different languages, just one or two verses, we sing, we pray -- the Spirit of reconciliation at work.

I have increasingly felt called to accompany individuals and groups in retreat, and have been praying about this. I have also strongly felt the need for more spiritual support, especially since my beloved spiritual director died a year ago. I am shouting with joy to share that 2023 has brought this into being. I have had requests to do a couple of clergy retreats in April and May, and will do another individual retreat in March. I will also provide morning meditation and reflections for the six day Tutu Leadership Program in March. I re-connected with former prayer

partner Ros Irlam, when she attended an SCA reunion here at the new year. We discovered a mutual desire to reconvene our prayer partnership, and have started online with in person when possible. I have also met a potential spiritual director whom I think will be a good fit – it would be on zoom as she is in the USA, I really like her and her training is both substantive and broad.

So grateful I found a way to do my annual 8 day silent retreat, through an idea that came to me in a recent morning prayer time. This had been eluding me for the past months, trying to find the right venue and person to guide me. Long story short, I am going to New York on 9 March, to go on retreat at West Park, and then attend the life profession of Br Luc on 18 March, to be a little part of the Volmoed community present at this wonderful event. Grateful to their Superior, Br Robert James, who has made this possible.

Another long story short, is that I applied to do a course through the Shalem Institute in the USA, ‘Transforming Communities through Contemplative Practices’, over the next eighteen months, which fits exactly my sense of what I feel called to offer and do more of at Volmoed. It was a very long shot after they extended the deadline, and I was accepted and given two thirds tuition assistance, which makes it possible. It is mostly online, with monthly zoom meetings, reading and reflection on fifteen books, a few Saturday seminars, and two six day residencies in Maryland, USA. I heard this good news on the same day I met with my new potential spiritual director whom I like very much. I teared up at the thought of real, actual support that is so essential to one’s wellbeing, that I have lacked and missed so much in the last three years, and now it’s falling into place all at the same time. God’s gift of grace in abundance! I am thoroughly grateful and excited! Check it out at [www.shalem.org](http://www.shalem.org)  
It will give me a certificate and recent qualification in an area in which I have a lot of experience but formal training was a long time ago. God is good!

Take a breath, yes it’s been a roller coaster year so far. It’s been amazing and I am grateful! For health and energy, for my home that provides a restorative place at the end of long, full days. I am grateful for many friends and the drum facilitators staying over at weekends this month, my washing machine has been busy with laundry and linen! I love the evenings watching the sunset and hearing the loud cricket choir. I’m especially grateful



that I can now swim and shower again, using a waterproof bandaid, and the scab is on its way out. I have joined a local boogey board group and actually done it a few times!

On a sadder note, my wonderful staff-neighbour Blazio, who has looked after the cows here, had to move away to another job and another home, still in the area, but I will miss his neighbourly presence. I ask your prayers for Volmoed as many people and children especially, will miss his broad smile, patient teaching how to milk a cow, beautiful garden and veggies, and all he has meant to so many.



So much to be grateful for, much to look forward to, including a visit from my nephew Stewart and new fiancé Sabian! Sending love and gratitude to you all in this season of Lent, wherever you are. Thank you for your prayers and good wishes, as Volmoed chaplain I cherish them, and see the fruit of your action right here.

Love and Blessings  
Wilma