

Warm Lenten greetings to you!

This year has already been full, rich, challenging and rewarding. Lent came early, after our annual Beloved Community workshop with our Volmoed youth leaders in training. A great group of young people learned so much in a few days and found it transforming. The increase in confidence levels is remarkable. Thanks for Seth Naicker the facilitator.



Before Ash Wednesday, the retreat ministry continued, with my first ever experience of leading a retreat for fifty Methodist clergy, in Stellenbosch. Much thanks to all who prayed for cooler days – for the three days of retreat, the temperatures were in the 20s not the high 30s as usual! That really helped all of us. The retreat theme was 'Growing in Compassion,' using material from the clergy retreats I have done at Volmoed, various prayer practices to explore the theme, and creative ways to reflect and pray. I was unsure how it



would work in such a large group, who had told me that 'Methodists don't do silence!' In the grace of God it all worked out well, with even one meal in silence following the session on Suffering and Compassion. The feedback has been positive, that many found the retreat deeply meaningful. At the end I was exhausted and exhilarated, and took quite a few days to recover from the intensity of it all – it was a joy.



At the end of February, Volmoed offered an icon course & retreat with the wonderful Charlotte Wepenaar Pedersen, a renowned icon teacher in Denmark and Scandinavia and around the world. She is a font of knowledge both technical and spiritual,

and I watched the six-day process as she guided five people to write (paint) an icon from beginning to end, with daily prayers and blessings for the icons



nearing the end, in May. It continues to be a fantastic source of inspiration, learning, discovering new resources to use, with a few projects still to do and some inspiring reading. It has been very challenging to do this course on top of all else here, but I have managed to stay current with it and I just love the material. I am grateful that I live and minister in a place like Volmoed where I can put all the learning and inspiration to good use. The grace of God always continues!



Globally like so many, I have no more words, and continue all the prayers and laments for the Holy Land, crying out for an end to violence, and a cease fire that lasts, with a commitment to working out a shared future together. As Bob Dylan said, 'how many deaths will it take till we know that too many people have died' ... On 21 March, Human Rights day, Cape Town holds a pilgrimage walk from Simonstown to Cape Town, as part of a global event of at least 140 similar pilgrimages around the world. The whole distance is 41 km, the length of Gaza, and prayerful stops will be made at mosques, synagogues and churches along the way. People can walk all or part of the distance.

Our young leaders will walk as a group and they began practicing by walking the 7km from the mall at the bottom of the R320 to Volmoed – every Thursday at 7.30am to arrive in time for the weekly 10am service. We pray the pilgrimages will be a visible sign of hope that peace is possible even when it looks impossible. May the light of Christ continue to shine for peace and hope and love throughout all the broken, wounded areas of the world.



I include again the poem below, as it seems not everyone received this or the Volmoed newsletter last month. Please do be in touch if you did not receive the January edition and we will send to you.

BE THE LIGHT

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world.

All things break.

And all things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say, but with intention.

So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.

The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you. (L.R.Knost)

Locally, please continue to pray:

- for the Volmoed staff, especially those with children at school, and those struggling to support their families.
- for the young adults in our youth leadership training program as they learn new drum making skills and participate in the Thursday program.
- for our youth program leadership team as we continue to build our capacity and infrastructure as an organization, and for our fundraising process.
- for John de Gruchy and Edwin Arrison, as John turns 85 in March and steps down as chair of the board of Council, and Edwin takes over as interim chair until the AGM in August.
- for the Volmoed trustees and council, who began a process of exploring how to express the vision and mission of Volmoed in a time of succession and transition as we approach the 40th anniversary in 2026.
- for myself as I travel, learn, and bring back the learning about retreats, and continued discernment how best to grow a formal retreat program at Volmoed in 2025, in collaboration and partnership with other people and organisations who share our vision and mission.

