

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

April 2024

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Alleluia!

We are still in the Easter season and thankfully Christ is still risen and joyful gratitude reigns! Alleluia!

Signs of resurrection and the living Christ have been beautifully evident in the past month.

My life is so enriched through young people. A group of Palestinian young people from Bethlehem, many of them theology students, arrived for a three-day retreat and reflection after a two week visit to Johannesburg and Cape Town. What an energetic, articulate and dedicated group! They gave Volmoed an olive wood cross with the Lord's Prayer written in Aramaic. They spent time in guided reflection and silence. They visited the drum making factory in Zwelihle, and the young people gave them a drum for Bethlehem Bible College. They drummed, sang and talked together, with high energy.



The drummers visited the Quest women's group in Hermanus who provided the perfect ocean and mountain backdrop for the drum circle, along with perfect weather. As they were welcomed, a pod of dolphins appeared in the ocean. Many women drummed for the first time. The young people told the story of how a drum is made, each one taking a turn to tell what task they do. Their public speaking training was done by one of the Quest members, and this helped them with their nervousness. They did a great job!





Life with VYLTP is always exciting and also enriching. The current focus in the Thursday program is on spirituality and spiritual practices. This is a seven week course that I am doing with them, based on the course I did last year as a project for the Shalem retreat leadership course. The intent is to explore practices that open our hearts to God's presence, discover the power and healing of God's presence in silence, and its importance for leadership. Each time they learn about a practice, they try it out, sit in silence afterwards, then journal about the experience. They share with someone who speaks their own language, and some choose to share in the larger group.

Thus far they have tried breath prayers as a form of centering prayer, a five minute version the Examen in Ignatian spirituality, and visio divina. Visio divina involves choosing a picture intuitively from a number of varied pictures, gazing at it for some time, sitting in silence, then journaling about the experience. This new cohort is very open, and those in their second year are clearly deepening in their understanding and awareness.

This ninety minute session each Thursday is a joy. On the drumming days in Zwelihle, they take ten minutes before lunch to sit in silence as a way to find space for quiet and prayer in their ordinary lives and not just at Volmoed.



When Dorothea Hendricks came on an extended retreat, we took the opportunity to do simple weeknight Taizé evening prayers for a couple of weeks. Many evenings there were three or four or even seven of us. What an unexpected joy! I would love to offer Taizé prayers at Volmoed on a more regular basis, but the viability and practicalities are not clear. Please pray as I discern how this might be possible.

The Shalem retreat leadership course is now in its last month. I have a large project to complete. It has been rewarding and energising, and has provided good tools and resources for future retreats. It has been a joy. I still have one retreatant a month, and have a few requests for the rest of the year. I am turning my attention to putting together a formal retreat program for Volmoed. Your prayers are welcome as we hope to partner with people and organisations who fit the vision and mission of Volmoed.



birds and bees in my garden and many sunsets and visitors – not as many sunrises!



I am grateful this month that the pace has slowed down. The first quarter of the year was completely full. Dare I say it, the rest of the year seems much more open. It has given time to sit and enjoy the flowers,



What has not slowed down is the financial need of so many in my orbit, whether staff or young people or others I know from other contexts. So many are in dire and desperate need just to feed their families. It is possible to help some but not all. Please pray with me to discern who and how best to help.

The wars in the world have also not slowed down, forty-one all told, as I last read. Like so many I struggle to remain hopeful that peace is possible, while knowing that clinging to hope is a must. That resurrection is not possible without crucifixion. That there is no Easter Sunday without Good Friday. That faithful and courageous people are holding on to life with a sliver of hope, all over the globe. I watch the campus protests and students raising their voices about Gaza, and know that historically, students and young people have led the way so often on the path of justice and peace. May it be so again. I pray that a path is found to release all hostages and prisoners, and for all parties to come to the table and stay there until a peaceful solution becomes possible.

As always, thank you so much for your love, support and prayers. May the risen Christ continue to show up in unexpected places and bring the joy that burns our hearts as we recognise the presence. May the risen Christ continue to shine light and Love for peace and hope throughout all the broken, wounded areas of our world.

Love,
Wilma

