

CHAPLAINS CORNER

Christ is risen! U Krestu uvukile! Christus het opgestaan!

Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Warm Easter greetings and blessings to you, from Volmoed!



What a month of March! The icon course retreat ended on the 1st, my sister Lise was out from England and came to visit for the weekend. We talked and walked, she on her new replaced knees, and we loved every minute. Grateful for sister catch up and bonding! The Tutu Leadership for Humanity program cohort arrived on Monday 4th, and long lost friend from UCT/Stellenbosch SCA and SUCA days, Danie Botha made a short visit. A lot of joy just all jampacked together!

The Tutu Leadership for Humanity program was an intense week of learning about the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, focus on Ubuntu, forgiveness, healing of self and society, integration of life and spirituality. I was involved in the program by doing body prayer and walking prayer/ meditation/silence/nature gazing before breakfast each morning; sharing my story; and a session on Tutu and Spirituali-

ty. Also enjoyed some one on one conversations with participants – one of whom works in the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in reconciliation and peacebuilding, another in the office of the mayor of Mossel Bay. Thank you for your prayers, These young people are incredible leaders, movers and shakers, and this bodes well for our future. it was remarkable and powerful. One of the best morning moments was the last one, seeing the whole of the bridge, that had since the floods been submerged for six months under a metre of mud and sand and water, now totally uncovered and more or less intact after six months. Thanks be for digger loaders and their skilled drivers!



Somehow getting it all together, I went to Washington DC on 8 March for the second residency of the Shalem course on Transforming Communities through contemplative group and individual retreats. It was a wonderful, though mostly very chilly week, with some spring cherry blossoms cheering up the dead winter trees.

It was a full, intense week of learning, including communal quiet time at 7.30 in the mornings, ending around 9pm. It included a 1 ½ day silent retreat focused on gratitude. My group continues to amaze and inspire me, each so different but somehow the most cohesive group I have experienced in a long while. There is much deep content for me to continue to absorb, and I'm trying to take time each day to do that. There are many inspiring ideas and resources to use in the future.



Over Palm Sunday weekend I attended a silent retreat at the very same beautiful retreat centre, this time it mostly rained and was below freezing in the mornings. I stayed inside! This was a project for the retreat leading course, to experience and reflect on the leadership of a silent retreat. The theme was 'Transforming in the Grace of Christ' led by Amy Kulesa. Again, it was intense and powerful, with focus on three Scripture stories of people who were transformed by their encounter with Jesus. Also on entering Holy Week with its eternal rhythm of death, burial and rebirth, as the most important rhythm of the spiritual life. There was and is so much depth in it for me, so much interior reflection, challenge and healing. I am still processing it all and have needed much more silent time for that since I returned earlier this week. Your prayers are welcomed.

This course ends in May. It has been a fantastic source of inspiration, learning, reading, discovering new resources to use, just one big project to go. It has been very challenging to do it on top of all else here, but I just love the material. I am so grateful that I live and minister at Volmoed where I can put all the learning and inspiration to good use. The grace of God always continues!



Inbetween these events, I got on a train to New York, and visited with longtime and new friends, all of whom have been at Volmoed in the last couple of years. What a joy to reunite! And keep the support and connections going, they are treasured.

My time with my hosts in Maryland also included a reunion of their diocesan group that visited Volmoed on pilgrimage with Bishop Eugene Sutton, in October 2022.

On Human Rights Day, 21 March, our young people participated in a pilgrimage walk from Simonstown to Cape Town, as part of a global event of at least 150 similar pilgrimages around the world. It was 41 km long, the length of Gaza where so many are displaced, much has been destroyed, and people are starting to die of hunger. a few made it all the way, and some got on a taxi to the end-point. One of them told me she was in a lot of pain, but prayed all the time to keep walking to the end, knowing that the people of Gaza experience so much more pain. They stopped at a mosque and church and parks along the way to pray and ended with a service at the Groote Kerk. May that give us hope.

Today as I write it is holy Saturday, when we wait and sit while Jesus was in the tomb, and according to Orthodox belief, overcoming the forces of evil and liberating the dead from their graves. We know that Easter resurrection will come. May we know despite all evidence to contrary, that Easter gives us hope. There was death, there was burial, there will be rebirth and new life. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, we are prisoners of hope. Because the resurrected Christ means that "goodness is stronger than evil, Love is stronger than hate, Light is stronger than darkness, Life is stronger than death, Victory is ours through the One that loves us."



May the resurrected Christ continue to shine light and Love for peace and hope throughout all the broken, wounded areas of our world!

