

GETUIE/WITNESS

Amptelike nuusbrief van Getuienisaksie | Official newsletter of Witness Ministry

“In every season and every circumstance, we are reminded of the truth that our calling is not to be passive bystanders in God's Kingdom, but active participants in His mission.”



EDITORIAL

Live out your calling in Christ!

As we draw closer to the end of another year, it's a perfect time to reflect on the heart of our calling as followers of Christ. In every season and every circumstance, we are reminded of the truth that our calling is not to be passive bystanders in God's Kingdom, but active participants in His mission. We find ourselves reflecting on the many blessings, challenges and milestones that have shaped our journey together in faith. It has been a year of growth and deepening relationships. We have been privileged to see God at work in the lives of individuals, churches and communities, and we are filled with gratitude for the countless ways He has been faithful.

This edition of our newsletter is once again filled with inspiring stories and vibrant photos showcasing the dedicated work Witness Ministry continues to carry out.

As we enter the season of Advent, let us hold fast to the hope that Christ brings a hope that does not disappoint, but rather transforms our hearts and our world.

May the peace of Christ fill your heart this Christmas. We pray that, by God's grace, we can continue to show His love, grow in our faith and serve others with compassion and generosity. As we move into the new year, let's remain faithful to that calling.



Rev. Daniël de Wet | Afrika Ekumene • Ecumenical Partnerships



MSINGA GENIET NOU DIVIDENDE VAN 'N WINTER BELEGGING

Tydens die naweek van 14-16 September 2024 het 'n groep van die Wes-Kaap Msinga besoek. DJ Muller van Kaapkerk deel sy ervaring. “Dit is lente in die Boland en die bloeisels aan die bome is soos kansels wat preek oor nuwe lewe en beloftes. Nuwe lewe na 'n lang winter en die belofte van geurige vrugte wat ons binnekort kan pluk en geniet – amper soos dividende van 'n winterbelegging.

Vyf van ons klim op 'n vliegtuig Durban toe en reis vandaar noordwaarts met die R33. Ek (DJ), Daniël de Wet, Mizelle Prinsloo, Albert Myburgh en Nati Stander is op pad vir iets wat ons steeds sukkel om te benoem. Ons wil dit nie 'n uitreik of 'n inreik noem nie en ons wonder steeds wat dit presies is. Toe ons Msinga binnery, begin ek my afvra of dit hier ook lente is.

Dit lyk nie so nie. Trouens, ek wonder of ons nie dalk in Zimbabwe beland het nie. Dit lyk só – vervalle, arm, vuil en besig. “Dit is maar hoe dit hier lyk,” sê Albert, wat al dikwels hier was. Vir my, Mizelle en Nati is dit ons eerste keer. Skielik begin dit na 'n uitreik voel...

Die Sondag woon ons 'n erediens by in Mhlumayo. Tydens die diens word daar dankie gesê vir ds. Lourens Schoeman en sy vrou, Hanlie, se betrokkenheid in Msinga sedert 1988. Patrick Lamula vertel oor sy eerste ontmoeting met 'n witmens in die 80's: ‘Die wit man het oor die berg na ons toe aangestap gekom.’ Hy verwys na Lourens. Patrick vertel die storie in Zulu en die tolk vertaal dit so: ‘This was the first time we see a white person, and then we find out, this person is in love with us.’ Hierdie woorde slaan my asem weg. Ek is so diep geraak deur die woorde dat ek eers buite moes gaan asem skep.

Ek vra die laaste aand vir Mizelle oor haar ervaring. Sy antwoord terwyl sy nog spartel om woorde nader te sleep en sê: ‘Ek dink my woorde sal eers oor twee weke kom.’ Miskien is dit hoekom ek ook nie heeltemal seker is wat ons hier kom doen het nie. Wat ek wel weet, is dat die bloeisels in Msinga vrugte sal dra wat hongeres kan voed. En ek weet dat ons vyf uit die Wes-Kaap nie op 'n uitreik was nie. Ons was kerk toe.”



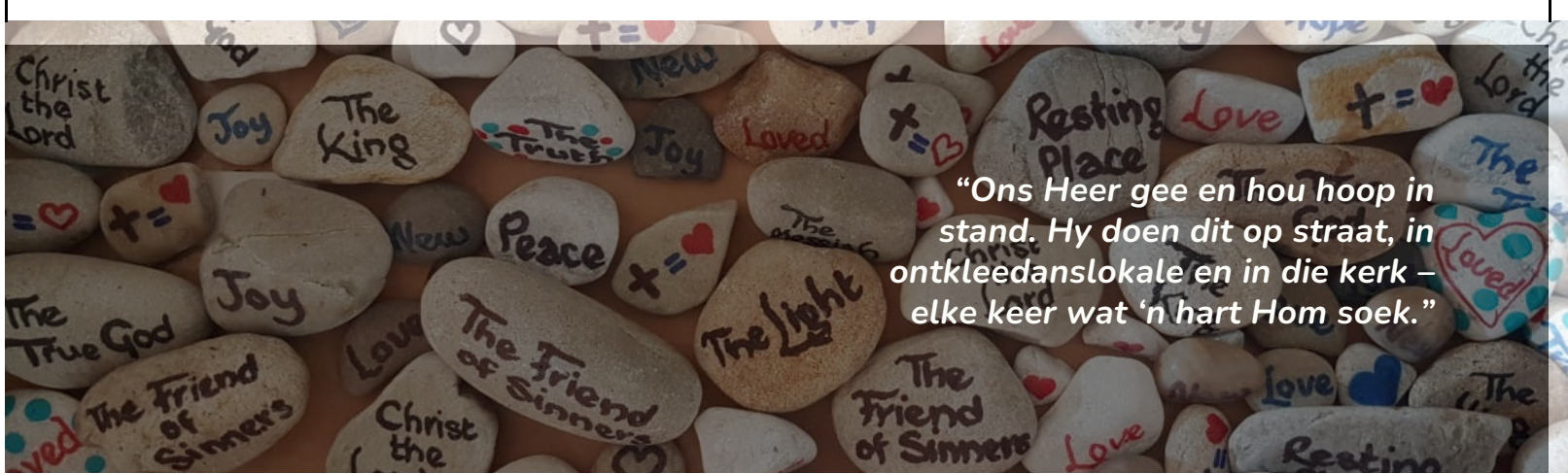
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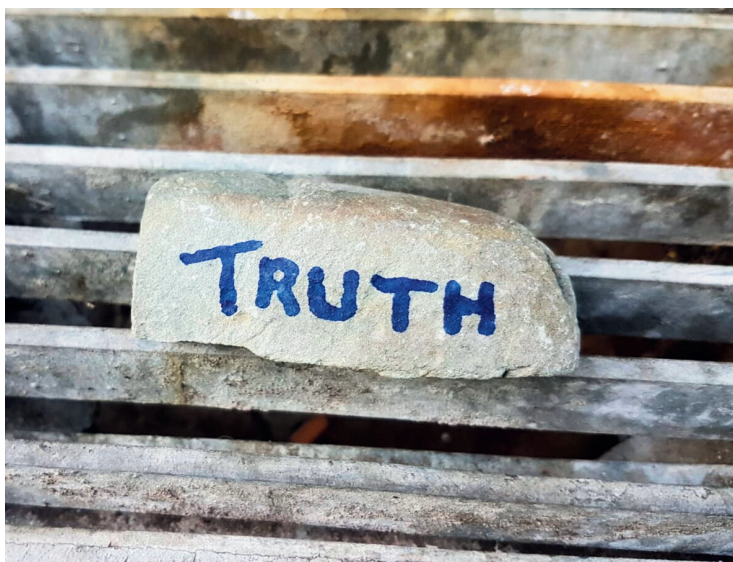
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Prostitusie verander in aanbidding

Die verhare van desperaatheid laat ons herhaaldelik besef dat ons Heer waarlik die enigste hoop is. Alles wat die vroue nodig het, word gevind in 'n verhouding met Christus en met ons, sy kerk. Hierdie pad is die biddende saamsoek na en saamstap op 'n pad wat net ons Heer kan maak.

Na die voorreg van jare se uitreik op straat, het ons die dringendheid ervaar om by die ander vroue óók uit te kom. Na jare se bid, het daar letterlik vir ons 'n deur oopgegaan by 'n gewilde ontkleedansklub in die stad. Ons word vriendelik, met oop arms en rooibostee, ontvang. Ons neem Bybelverhale en -liedere en geskenkies saam en ons luister. Ons saai, gooi nat en oes – net soos jy, na watter oesland jy ook al genooi is. Hy bring die groei.



En ons is die bevoorregtes wat Hy aanhou nooi as sy vriende om in sy oesland te werk, want Hy is besig om alles nuut te maak.



Football can be a tool to engage young people in communities, creating spaces on the field where they can feel loved, valued and safe - and encounter the love of Jesus.

Sawubona - I see you - the power of safe spaces

In September 2024, Ambassadors Football had the privilege of partnering once again with 25:40 and The Leadership Experience (LXP) to train 29 coaches from various communities across South Africa. The journey of transformation began as it often does: with uncertainty. On Day 1, there was the familiar awkwardness as individuals of different genders, ages and races came together, cautiously testing the waters to connect.

By the 5th and final day, through God’s grace, the atmosphere had completely shifted. The power of creating safe spaces was evident in the heartfelt responses of the participants:

“
**THIS WAS ONE OF THE BEST WEEKS OF MY LIFE.
I FELT SEEN AND HEARD THIS WEEK.**

Throughout the training, we intentionally focus on building safe spaces where people feel valued, visible and understood. Central to this is the Zulu greeting “Sawubona” - meaning “I see you.” This simple yet profound acknowledgement sets the tone for everything Ambassadors Football does.

The week is carefully structured to balance practical football sessions - where laughter and play bring people together - with deeper classroom moments. In these spaces, participants confront their own wounds, like those from absent or broken parental relationships. Trainers model authenticity by sharing their personal stories, creating a safe and inviting environment for others to do the same. This is where the transformative power of “Sawubona” shines: “I see you.”

One participant who experienced this transformation was Yamkela Marwana. A young coach, Yamkela joined the program as part of her LXP journey, with no prior understanding of or interest in football. Over the course of the week, her perspective changed. She discovered how football could be a tool to engage young people in her community, creating spaces on the field where they can feel loved, valued and safe - and encounter the love of Jesus.

Ben Marais from Ambassadors Football recalls her final goodbye on the last day. Yamkela embraced him with joy and tears, offering a hug so big it took his breath away. Her parting words embodied the week’s message: “Sawubona – I see you.” Through moments like these, we are reminded of the profound impact of connection, grace and being truly seen.



Nkosi sikelel' Afrika: 'n Gebed in aksie in Ceres

Nkosi sikelel' Afrika – God seën Afrika. Ons sing dit so dikwels, maar bedoel ons die woorde in hierdie gebed wanneer ons dit uit volle bors langs die sportveld, by 'n saalopening of parlamentsvergadering sing? Hierdie gebed wat die kern van ons hoop vir Suid-Afrika verwoord. Ons hoop vir 'n nasie waar geregtigheid en vrede om elke hoek en draai tasbaar is. Waar kinders hand-aan-hand speel in strate wat skoon is van vrees en gevul is met lag. Waar ouers met trots hul families voed omdat hulle werk het wat hul waardig laat voel. Waar ons vir mekaar luister en saamwerk vir 'n beter toekoms.

Die #100DorpeDialog-gesprekssessie in Ceres, gefasiliteer deur dr. Braam Hanekom van die Sentrum vir Publieke Getuienis (SPG), was só 'n gebed in aksie. Rolspelers van die gemeenskap het om tafels gesit, stories gedeel, geluister en begin droom oor hoe Ceres 'n lig kan wees in 'n nasie wat ons dikwels oorweldig laat voel oor al die uitdagings.



”

Mag jy die moed hê om op te staan en te praat, maar ook die moed hê om te gaan sit en te luister.

“

Om op te staan en jou stem te laat hoor, vra moed. Dit beteken om ongemaklike waarhede te deel en ongelykhede te ontbloot. Maar luister vra dieselfde, indien nie meer nie. Dit vra dat jy jou eie vooroordele opsy moet skuif en iemand anders se pyn en hoop moet probeer verstaan.

In 'n samelewing waar mense toenemend kwaad is vir mekaar, het respek 'n skaars kommoditeit geword. Respek by ander begin by respek vir jouself. Dan gaan dit verder na die eenvoudige, maar kragtige daad om te groet, om mense in die oë te kyk en om nie bang te wees vir mekaar nie.

Maar daar is een manier om hierdie gaping te oorbrug: deur stories.

Die groep het opnuut besef hoe belangrik dit is om na die stories van ander te luister, veral dié wat ons normaalweg miskyk. Elke storie is 'n brug – oor wantroue, oor vrees, oor onkunde. Dit is deur stories dat ons mekaar se werklikhede begin verstaan en weer leer hoe om respek vir mekaar te hê.



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‘n Getuienis van ‘n groeiende kerk in Malawi

“Die Here het groot dinge vir ons gedoen en ons is vol vreugde!”

In die oop velde van Malawi, onder die warm son van Afrika, het ‘n geskiedenis ontvou wat diep spore in die harte van die gemeenskappe agtergelaat het. Die Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), wat 100 jaar gelede gevorm is, het gegroei tot ‘n magtige pilaar van geloof en hoop en het duisende lewens onherroeplik verander. Hierdie jaar, in Augustus, het die CCAP hul eeufees gevier – ‘n tyd van terugkyk, dankbaarheid en hoop vir die toekoms.

Die CCAP is nie net ‘n kerk nie; hulle is ‘n lewende monument van God se werk deur mense wat geroepe is om te dien. Wat in 1924 begin het as die versmelting van twee sinodes, het gegroei tot vyf sinodes wat vandag oor Malawi, Zimbabwe en Zambië strek. “Die CCAP was ‘n belangrike vennoot in ons nasie se reis,” het President Lazarus Chakwera van Malawi gesê tydens die dankdiens op 25 Augustus in Lilongwe. Met bykans vier miljoen lede in Malawi alleen, het die CCAP ‘n magtige stem geword in die bevordering van sosiale en ekonomiese ontwikkeling.



“Mag ons die Here bly dien met die ywer en toewyding van ons voorgangers en mag ons getuig van sy genade in alles wat ons doen.” – ds. Humphreys Zgambo

Prof. Marius Nel het in sy toespraak die leierskap van die CCAP uitgesonder, wat sentraal was in die kerk se groei. “Dit gee my soveel vreugde om as verteenwoordiger van die NG Kerk in Suid-Afrika in hierdie viering te deel. Die CCAP het ‘n sterk en florerende kerk geword weens die geloof van julle predikante, diakens, ouderlinge en onderwysers wie in hulle alledaagse lewe, alledaagse bedienings, gehoorsaam is aan God. Die CCAP is nie net geografies geleë in die hart van Afrika nie – die CCAP is die spirituele hart van Afrika! Elke lid van die CCAP wat ons ontmoet, straal ‘n liefde, warmte en genot vir die lewe teenoor ons uit wat ons stomslaan. Julle is ‘n ware refleksie van die hart van God. Mag julle aanhou om so te wees.”



CONGREGATIONAL WITNESS PARTNER TO HELP BUILD SUPPORT NETWORK FOR PASTORS

At Witness Ministry, building meaningful partnerships to embody our vision and enhance our programs is a core priority. This semester, such a partnership became a reality when the task team for Congregational Witness partnered with Jessie Orwin of Inner-vate regarding Heart Styles, a tool to attend to the mental health and capacity of leaders. The goal we hope to reach with this venture is to help build a support network for our URCSA ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

The need for such support was underscored in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. As pastors guided their congregations through trauma and uncertainty, the representatives of Witness Ministry highlighted the urgent necessity of addressing the mental health of these “wounded healers.” Ministers, while supporting others, often neglect their own well-being - a reality we are committed to changing.



“As ministers, we often identify as ‘wounded healers.’ While we listen to our congregants’ deepest traumas, we often neglect our own well-being.”

On 1 October 2024, this longstanding goal was partly materialised when we facilitated our first Heart Styles Workshop at Stillebosch Retreat Farm for a group of 25 URCSA ministers and ministerial candidates. With the expertise of Jessie Orwin, the ministers were introduced to this self-awareness and self-care tool. The workshop was structured in such a way that they had ample time to reflect on their own mental health and personal and spiritual journeys. Old and new friendships were rekindled and forged, and the gift of unity was deepened.

Rev. Samantha Terhart, one of the attendees, eloquently captured the workshop’s impact:

“As ministers, we often identify as ‘wounded healers.’ While we listen to our congregants’ deepest traumas and accompany them on their journeys, we often neglect our own well-being. The Heart Styles Workshop was an eye-opener for many of us, encouraging reflection on our personal journeys – something we rarely do. This emphasised the importance of our well-being and how our stories and traumas influence our self-perception and ministry. This workshop was unique due to its focus on us, as leaders, rather than solely on our ministry roles.

It was refreshing to explore my own narrative and gain coping mechanisms that can aid my personal journey. As ministers, we frequently give until our cups run dry, risking burnout. I wholeheartedly recommend Heart Styles to anyone seeking to move beyond the label of a ‘wounded healer’ and embark on a journey of self-awareness towards inner well-being.”



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Isibindi: Ons glo dat die kerk ook 'n familie moet wees vir mekaar

Isibindi is 'n alternatiewe geloofsgemeenskap - ons glo dat die kerk ook 'n familie moet wees vir mekaar. Ons maak hierdie geloof prakties deur op verskeie maniere huisvesting te gee vir jongmense in nood. Ons het ook 'n skoolkoshuis waar tieners uit moeilike omstandighede kan woon en kan tuis voel.



Hier kry hulle die geleentheid om te fokus op hulle skoolwerk en te ervaar dat mense vir hulle omgee en lief is.

En ja, soms raak ons moeg en moedeloos. Maar dan is dit goed om te onthou waar elkeen van hierdie jongmense vandaan kom en watter verskil hierdie gemeenskap in hul lewens maak.

Ons het onlangs vir van die tieners gevra om iets te verwoord van hulle ervaring by die Isibindi koshuis: Een van hulle sê: *"At Isibindi, there is structure and care and love like I have never felt before."*

'n Ander meisie skryf: *"I am thankful for the amount of support I get. And they cherish us. I want to thank God for the family He has given us."*

Baie van hulle het vertel hoe dankbaar hulle is vir iets so eenvoudig soos 'n dak oor hul kop en 'n warm bed – dinge wat nie noodwendig vanselfsprekend was in hul lewens nie. Maar bo alles het meeste genoem dat Isibindi hulle die geskenk van 'n ware familie gee: mense wat hulle aanvaar en liefhet nes hulle is.

Soos Jaco Strydom ons herinner: **"Bloed is dikker as water, maar die Gees is dikker as bloed."** Waar ons saamgebond word deur die Gees, daar ervaar ons ware familie. Ons nooi jou uit om deel van hierdie familie te word – kom eet saam, help met huiswerk of vind jou plek waar jy 'n verskil kan maak.



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“If the church does not address the hunger in the community, the gangs will step in.”

- Llewellyn MacMaster

Who's feeding our children?

When Ralph Stanfield, one of Cape Town's most notorious gang leaders, was arrested, it wasn't his crimes that sent shockwaves through the community – it was the desperate plea of a mother. As news cameras rolled, she asked a question that exposed a chilling truth: “Who's going to feed our children now?” In that moment, the line between criminality and survival blurred, revealing how deeply entrenched gangs have become in the lives of South Africa's most vulnerable.

Gang violence has been an entrenched issue in South Africa for decades, but the evolution of these criminal networks presents new challenges that communities, law enforcement and even the church must confront with renewed urgency.

At a recent talk hosted by the Western Cape Ecumenical Network, Llewellyn MacMaster shed light on how gangsterism has developed into a complex, adaptable problem, often filling societal voids left by government and community structures.

At the heart of the gangsterism crisis lies the unmet needs of the people. Gangs are acutely aware of the socio-economic struggles of those around them and are quick to provide for basic needs, thus ensuring loyalty and dependency.

The church, MacMaster argues, must adopt a “Theology of Responsibility,” where its role extends beyond the pulpit and into the streets. “The future of my grandkids is linked to all the other children in South Africa,” he said. If faith communities do not engage with the problems of crime, hunger and poverty, they risk leaving the field open for gangs to grow.

“It may not threaten my immediate context, but it threatens my conscience,” one of the members pointed out, reflecting on the moral disconnect many feel about the crisis.

Will the church and communities rise to the challenge or will they leave a vacuum for gangs to fill? The choice is ours and the consequences will shape the future of generations to come.

Makhathini getuig van 'n gemeenskap wat eenheid vind in Christus

Tydens 'n onlangse Makhathini Vennootskap-vergadering by die VGK Kylemore het ds. Daan Dekker vertel: "Dit was tydens 'n sendingweek op Stellenbosch dat ons as studente diep bewus geword het van die geestelike nood in Noordoos-Zululand." In 1971 het 'n groep teologiese studente van Stellenbosch, waarvan ds. Dekker deel was, 'n uitreik na Zululand onderneem wat uiteindelik gelei het tot die stigting van die VGK Makhathini.



Oor die jare het daar waardevolle verhoudinge tussen die Makhathini-gemeente en ander gemeentes ontstaan. By die onlangse vennote-byeenkoms op 12 Oktober 2024 is inspirerende stories gedeel. Elcine Hulme het vertel van Bonginkosi Mthembu, 'n voltydse medewerker, se bekering tydens 'n besoek van die NGK Stellenberg aan Makhathini. Anita Botha het haar ervaring gedeel van die diep indruk wat Joseph Gumede, 'n blinde evangelis, op haar lewe gemaak het.

Thelma Smit van Danabaai het vertel hoe hul kontak met Makhathini hulle geïnspireer het om meer in hul plaaslike gemeenskap te doen. Ds. Floors Avenant van Gansbaai het gedeel hoe 'n besoek van Makhathini-lidmate aan Gansbaai tydens Pinkster vanjaar bevestig het dat missionaat (die Woord) en diakonaat (die daad) ten nouste verbind is. "Hierdie modellering van die Makhathini-gemeente het ons in Gansbaai geïnspireer en uitgedaag om die pad van diensbaarheid sterker en praktieser te bewandel."

Die byeenkoms is met 'n nagmaalviering afgesluit, waar almal saam gesing het:

"We are heirs of the Father.

We are joint heirs with the Son.

We are people of His Kingdom.

We are family, we are one."



"Ons noem mekaar broer en suster, familie in Christus."

"Die eenheid wat ons hierdie jaar tussen Afrikaanse witmense, Zoeloes en Zambiers ervaar het, is ongelooflik. Ons noem mekaar broer en suster, familie in Christus en dit gee my soveel hoop vir ons pragtige land. En hierdie eenheid, volgens Jesus, is van kardinale belang, want dit is een van ons belangrikste getuienisse van Jesus se oproep tot 'n nuwe lewe!" So getuig ds. Mikal Barnes, leraar van die NG Gemeente Oosterlig, Pretoria, wat die afgelope tien jaar op uitreike na Makhathini gaan.

"Ek is so dankbaar dat ds. Kunene ons hieraan herinner het; dat hulle my en ons spanne altyd in Makhathini verwelkom; dat hulle ons oor geloof leer. Ek is dankbaar dat hulle ons familie is en waardeur uit die diepte van my hart elke geleentheid wat hulle ons gee om ander jongmense te lei in hul verhouding met Jesus. Dit alles dra daartoe by om 'n beter Suid-Afrika te bou waar daar die EENHEID in Christus is wat ons aan mekaar bind."



Louwrens van der Westhuizen



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DEAR IMSA...

For the past six years, I have been ministering at a fencing business. It is always a joy to see these men come together once a month to eagerly hear the word of God. While I haven't had the opportunity to get to know them personally, aside from occasional chats when needed, I cherish these moments of sharing God's love.

Our church is deeply rooted in the community, engaging in various activities such as children's programs and neighbourhood gatherings.

Recently, our dedicated women's group visited a local home to share the gospel. They encountered a woman who was to escape her life of alcoholism. As they shared the message of the gospel, she surrendered her life to Jesus and has faithfully attended our fellowship since.

On more than one occasion, her longtime boyfriend accompanied her to church but never entered the building. During one of these "drop-offs," I had the chance to speak with him before he left. When I introduced myself, he shyly replied, "I know you, pastor; you regularly come to my work to preach to us." I was thrilled to meet this man who has been listening to me share the love of Jesus at his workplace. Without either of us realising it, God was at work, bringing us together not just at his job, but now in his home as well.

I praise the Lord for this lady who faithfully serves Him. At work, her boyfriend now feels more comfortable approaching me to talk. Although he hasn't yet professed Jesus as the Lord of his life, I believe God is working in his heart. The gospel has travelled from his workplace right into his home and to us as a church, a congregation.



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‘n Antwoord op die aarde wat sug – ons gemeentes plant bome!

In ‘n gees van genesing het ons Groenspan vanjaar ‘n inisiatief geloods deur gemeentes aan te moedig om bome te plant tydens Boomplantweek. Hierdie projek was ‘n pragtige voorbeeld van hoe ons as geloofsgemeenskap ‘n tasbare verskil kan maak in die skepping. "Ons wil graag almal bedank wat deel was van die projek. Twintig gemeentes het deelgeneem, tot gemeentes so ver as die Oos-Kaap en Limpopo! Ons hoop dat ander gemeentes ook geïnspireer was om bome te plant en sien daarna uit dat nog meer gemeentes volgende jaar betrokke sal raak," sê Dewald Hoffmann, van die Groenspan.

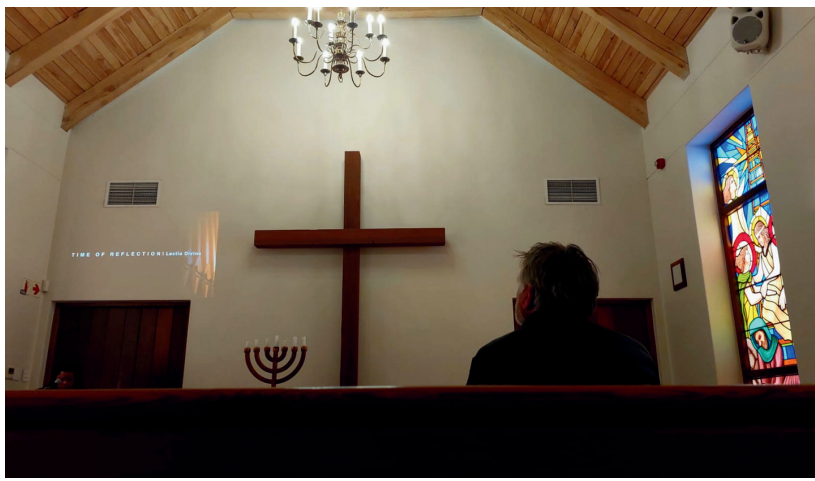
Seisoen van Skepping is ‘n oproep tot aksie, vir meer as net September. Dit herinner ons dat ons nie net kykers is nie, maar deelnemers in God se skepping. Ons het die geleentheid om die aarde, wat op hierdie oomblik in die geskiedenis meer kwesbaar is as ooit tevore, te genees en te herstel. Dit is nie ‘n opsie nie; dit is ons plig.



Dewald Hoffmann



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The church's role in a troubled South Africa is compassion

In the Gospel of Matthew (9:36), we find a profound moment where Jesus, seeing the crowds, was “moved with compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Would this not also be His reaction if He walked through the troubled streets of Khayelitsha or Nyanga today?

In a country weighed down by inequality, crime and despair, the Western Cape Ecumenical Network (WCEN) gathered for its yearly general meeting to reflect on the church's role amidst the pressing issues facing South Africa.

The answer? The church must speak out and build relationships, just as Christ called us to do.

The key message that emerged from this gathering was clear: the church can no longer be silent or afraid to speak up in the face of South Africa's challenges. The silence of the church in moments of crisis risks becoming complicity. As one speaker eloquently put it, “If the church doesn't speak up, who will?” In times of injustice, hunger and social breakdown, the church must raise its voice, not only in prayer but in action.

After all, as the body of Christ, we are called to be His hands and feet, reaching out in love and justice.



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Ons streef daarna om in die toekoms dié nuusbrieff sover moontlik **elektronies** te versend. Stuur gerus jou e-posadres aan sodat ons jou hierby kan insluit.

We are striving to send this newsletter **electronically** as far as possible in the near future. Please send us your email address so we can include you in this process.

MAAK 'N
BYDRAE

Getuie/Witness

We are called to serve and witness together in and from Africa

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