



CONGREGATIONAL WITNESS

OCTOBER 2022



NEWSLETTER



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A message from our

Chair

Beloved members of URCSA Cape, it seems as if we find ourselves in a religious cul-de-sac since the COVID-19 outbreak. Since the first lockdown period was announced (26 March 2020 – 30 April 2020), things would never be the same again. As we moved through the different levels of this life-threatening pandemic and as we had to say goodbye to loved ones, we realized that the damages done by COVID-19 were destructive and we have a lot of constructive and reconstructive work to be done.

The congregations of URCSA Cape, according to feedback we got from church leaders, struggle to get out of the cul-de-sacs and move forward. But we don't have a choice, because we are called to be a living and faithful witness as a church and our voices and actions in the trenches of our communities will leave a void if we are not there.

However, with COVID-19 came the realization that our old ways of being church are not relevant anymore. Out of these trenches, we need to give birth to new ways of being church – new ways of being relevant.

This is part of our mission as the ministry and task team working with our congregations, to support and accompany our congregations to be church in new and relevant ways. And we need to be creative and innovative as we take on this great task with the power and wisdom from the Holy Spirit and with a spirit of humility.

In the October Newsletter of Congregational Witness, we hope that you will get a sense that this is our endeavour.

Greetings,

Danny Bock

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OFFICE SUPPORT

WE WELCOME PROPONENT AIDAN WINDVOGEL

During October we also welcomed Prop. Aidan Windvogel as an admin support in the office of Congregational Witness.

Aidan will assist until our Witness Ministry office closes on 15 December.

He will focus on the Contextual Bible Reading (CBR) affairs and the communication and co-ordination of workshops, conferences, and training with URCSA Cape's congregations and presbyteries.

The office's contact number is 021 957 7184. Please feel free to contact Aidan or e-mail him at apwindvogel@gmail.com.



*At your
service!*

THE FACILITATION OF RESEARCH AND WORKSHOPS WITH CONGREGATIONS AND PRESBYTERIES

WITNESS MINISTRY OF SA GESTIG REVISITING THEIR MISSIONAL CALLING

On 1 October 2022 the MSS for Congregational Witness, Rev. Stephen Pedro, facilitated a workshop with the Witness Ministry of SA Gestig Congregation. He was assisted by Prop. Randow Jantjies who introduced CBR to the members present.

Rev. Pedro was invited by the Witness Ministry Team of the congregation to advise them as to how they can become more missionally focused to attend to the student community around the congregation, and their members who are not actively part of the congregation and the ministry, especially post-COVID.

During the presentation Rev. Pedro reminded them that being a missional church with an outward-looking ministry is much more than having a few outreach programmes or an evangelisation week. It is about cultivating a missional culture as a congregation. The cultivation of a missional culture does not take place overnight but it's a process that can take years. More than that, it requires from the congregation and the leadership to covenant with God and each other to embark and stay on this journey, to commit themselves to the process, even if it becomes draining and messy, and to be intentional, consistent, and persistent in the dream to be a missional congregation. Whilst at the same time being always open and expecting to be led by the Holy Spirit in new and exciting ways, to reach this vision.

So, the pertinent question is not how we become missional, but how do we change the culture of the congregation if being missional is not part of the DNA of the congregation.

This is also the crux of the support of him and his team of facilitators to congregations. To support and accompany them in this challenging but exiting journey of transforming their congregational culture.

And Contextual Bible Reading (CBR) is a powerful way to start this conversation and/or get the ball rolling.

Congregations are encouraged to invite Rev. Pedro for this life-changing conversation. His team of facilitators are waiting to be of assistance.



What a privilege and joy that our moderator, Dr Llewellyn MacMaster joined our discussion.

THE TRAINING OF FACILITATORS TO ASSIST WITH THE SUPPORT AND ACCOMPANIMENT SERVICE

FOLLOW-UP TRAINING WITH LICENSED CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY (PROPONENTS)

The privilege and task to support and accompany congregations on this life-changing and transformational journey of discernment, requires constant and continual reflection and meditation on and engagement with the theology and practice of being church and how to support and accompany a congregation and its leaders.

Hence, at Congregational Witness, we placed a high premium on continual training and empowerment to have capacity and the necessary capabilities and skills to facilitate transformational processes with congregations.

On 10 October the MSS for Congregational Witness again had such a follow-up training with a group of our licensed candidates. They continued with the training of facilitating a CBR and the introduction of CBR to our presbyteries. They also continued with the training of how to facilitate the assessment phase of the accompaniment process with congregations. The focus at this stage of the training is the missional board game, how to facilitate this interactive and fun exercise with congregational leaders to explore where the congregation is on the missional trajectory.

Congregations are encouraged once again to invite these trained and well-equipped facilitators to facilitate the missional board game with them and experience that engaging church stuff can be challenging but exiting and fun as well.



Rev. Stephen Pedro, 2nd from right, in conversation with Prop. Ashwin Thyssen. On the left are Proponents Jayson Gribble, Aidan Windvogel and Rachel Linderoth

OUR PROJECTS TO STRENGTHEN OUR SUPPORT AND ACCOMPANIMENT

INTRODUCTION OF CBR TO OUR MINISTRIES



The group of CWM members with Rev. Stephen Pedro (far right), Rev. Babalwa Sifuba (front centre) and Prop. Don-Marco Jonaan (at the back with spectacles)

At Congregational Witness we believe that the most vital place to build capacity is on congregational level. The roll out of our few projects and programmes to strengthen our support of congregations has this in focus, to build capacity and empower each other with capabilities.

We know it will take years if we want to take up this task on our own. But if we empower our leaders on presbytery level, they can take the baton further to empower the leaders on congregational level and the congregational leaders their members, our congregants.

Because of this believe and vision the MSS initiated a process to introduce CBR to our ministries, starting with our youth and women ministries. During the week of 18 to 20 October, he visited the CBR introduction workshop with the Christian Women's Ministry (CWM) of the presbyteries within the Eastern Cape part of our Cape Regional Synod, that took place in Cradock.

The workshop was co-ordinated and facilitated by Rev. Babalwa Sifuba and she was assisted by Prop. Don-marco Jonaan. The weekend of 21 to 23 October, Rev. Sifuba and Prop. Don-marco facilitated the same workshop with a group of youth leaders from our Christian Youth Ministry, also in Cradock.

On the weekend of 28 to 30 October a similar workshop was co-ordinated and facilitated by Proponents Rachel Linderoth, Jayson Gribble, Dewald Jacobs, with the assistance of Proponents Ashwin Thyssen and Aidan Windvogel.

With the support of Rev. Pedro and Congregational Witness a group of 15 youth leaders from different presbyteries within and from the Western and Northern Cape could come together to read the Bible contextually with the goal to seek sustainable, scripture-based solutions for the challenges facing the CYM community of URCSA Cape.

They decided to tackle the theme of “Belonging” within URCSA Cape as a challenge that needs to be addressed, especially among our youth. Do our young members feel they don’t belong, and why? How can the youth of URCSA Cape address this challenge if it is the case indeed?

“I’ve spent part of the Saturday with this group of leaders of our church and it really warmed my heart to see our youth leaders engaging with each other, grappling with scripture, seeking for sustainable answers as to how we can ensure that every member of our beloved church, especially our young congregants, can feel a true sense of belonging on congregational level,” says Rev. Pedro.

To read more about these blessed and enriching CBR workshops go to www.witnessministry.christians.co.za.



The CYM group at the Manyano Centre in Paarl



What a JOY to be part of CBR!