



CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY & WITNESS MINISTRY
Task Team Congregational Witness



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A message from *Petri Hofland*

Dear brothers and sisters,

Cordial greetings from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands! It's a privilege to be able to greet you from the other side of the world, connected through the Spirit of Christ.

In this newsletter you will read many encouraging words on what Contextual Bible Study (CBS) means to the lives of individuals, congregations and ministries. CBS is something that binds people together. The core of CBS is reading the Bible together as a community, taking into account your own context. It's supposed to be a slow process: from identifying a shared challenge (SEE), trying to understand what the Bible says about this (JUDGE) and then identifying which actions can be taken to overcome the challenge (ACT).

I'm grateful that we've had the opportunity to start this CBS process within URCSA. There's still a long way to go, but the responses so far are encouraging. I've had the privilege of participating in a CBS workshop earlier this year. One of the participating women made a remark I will never forget: "I've been preached the Bible all my life, but I've never read the Bible for myself. This workshop has changed my way of thinking."

Reading the Bible can transform lives – if you read it critically and let the Holy Spirit move. I wish all of you this life-transforming experience.

I would like to thank Rev. Pedro for his enthusiasm and dedication, Rev. Sifuba for her facilitation, and all the others who have become part of the CBS process. May CBS build your faith and make your church life fruitful and a blessing to all.

With warm regards,

Petri Hofland

Programme officer
Kerk in Actie – Protestant Church in the Netherlands

A message from the project manager

Rev. Stephen Pedro



Our last CBS Newsletter of a long, challenging but exciting three years.

And what a privilege it was to lead the way in ensuring that our 29 presbyteries, congregations and ministries are introduced to such a powerful transformational method and tool. Moreover, to manage a process that empowered more than 100 leaders with the capability to facilitate a Contextual Bible Study and in so doing make a small contribution to one of our synod's priorities, to build leadership capacity on presbyterial and congregational level.

But I did not do it alone. It was an organisational and team effort. A big thank you to my colleagues from Kerk in Actie, Witness Ministry, Congregational Ministry, and various other partners we could journey with. An extra special thank you to our main donor, Kerk in Actie of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, and Witness Ministry of our DRC-URC family, and Cape Empowerment Trust, who also contributed to our project.

A special word of thanks to Revs Babalwa Sifuba and Moses Baartman, who have started the implementation of the project with me. Thank you to the colleagues from URCSA Cape, and later the leaders of the Women's and Youth Ministries of URCSA Cape, who've joined the process with such commitment and excitement.

It was not easy, especially when we had to face and dealt with the disruption, destruction, and trauma of the COVID pandemic. But it was worth it. Especially when you hear one of the leaders of the ministries exclaimed: "CBS is a 'wow' moment for URCSA Cape, something we really need right now".

At the same time, we are looking forward with excitement and hope for what still lies ahead. Now the onus shifts to our trained CBS facilitators, congregations, and ministries to cement the ground we've gained. We need to convert the goals we've reached into SMART action plans that can be executed to make the much-needed and transformational impact on the lived realities of our communities.

Rev. Stephen Pedro

CBS INTRODUCTION

With regards to the Introduction of CBS over the past six months, six workshops have been facilitated with church councils and ministries of presbyteries in the Eastern, Western and Southern Cape.



EASTERN CAPE

Presbytery of Graaff-Reinet CWM

For this workshop it was decided in advance to attend to the challenge of leadership, which has been identified as a priority by our synod, hence the SEE part of CBS was not done. During Session 1, which was facilitated by Sr Nosipho Konki, she introduced 22 CWM members to a summary of what CBS is all about, after which Rev. Stephen Pedro explained shortly how the SEE part is done with a group in a congregation. During Session 2, which was facilitated by him, the group focused on the DISCERNMENT part and read together from Exodus 18. The ACT part will be facilitated with the group at a later stage.

- 
- At Graaff-Reinet
 - 13 May 2023
 - Read [more](#)



URCSA Hofmeyr

Sr Nosipho Konki introduced, and facilitated, this CBS Workshop with 23 members from the Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking URCSA Congregations in Hofmeyr. Upon request, they agree to focus on the challenge of leadership within their community instead of having a complete session of doing the SEE part of CBS. For the DISCERNMENT part, they also read together Exodus 18. This allowed them sufficient time to focus on the ACTION part of CBS and to compile an Action Plan.



- 
- At Hofmeyr
 - 2 July 2023
 - Read [more](#)

Presbytery of Fish River

On Saturday, 22 July 2023, Rev. Stephen Pedro and Sr Nosipho Konki, introduced CBS to URC Immanuel and a few other neighbouring congregations in Cradock.

- At Cradock
- 20-23 July 2023
- [Read more.](#)



WESTERN CAPE

Presbytery of CLANWILLIAM host three CBS Introduction Workshops on the same day



CYM



CWM



Church council

On 15 April 2023, three leadership groups of the Presbytery of Clanwilliam have been introduced to Contextual Bible Study (CBS). They were the Christian Women's Ministry ([CWM](#)), the Christian Youth Ministry ([CYM](#)), and the church council of URC Klawer - indeed a unique event! The theme questions they focused on were the following:

- How are we called to recruit? (CWM)
- The search for identity amidst peer pressure (CYM)
- How do we show unity as a beacon of hope? (Church council)

- At Klawer
- 15 April 2023
- [Read more](#)

Presbytery of ZUURBRAAK's CYM & Ministries of URCSA Robertson



Prop. Jayson Gribble, assisted by CYM leaders, Jean-Pierre Manuel and Divian Carolus, facilitated this CBS Introduction Workshop with the CYM of the Presbytery of Zuurbraak and Ministry Leaders of the URC Robertson Congregation. They focused on the challenge of being a relevant church in our communities today.

- In Robertson
- 22 April 2023
- Read more.



Presbytery of WORCESTER CWM



- At Worcester
- 13 May 2023
- Read more

This CBS Introduction Workshop at URC Worcester East, facilitated by Rev. WJ McKay, was also attended by the local minister, Rev. John Willemse, and his wife. They focused on the challenge of leadership, and read together Exodus 18:16-27 as a guide for discernment.

TRAINING OF CBS FACILITATORS

Five workshops have been facilitated with the Christian Women's Ministry (CWM) by Rev. Babalwa Sifuba. She also facilitated one workshop with the Christian Youth Ministry (CYM) leaders.

EASTERN & SOUTHERN CAPE

Presbytery of Uitenhage CWM

This CBS Facilitator's Training Workshop has been held at URC Tinarha in Kariega in the Eastern Cape. It was attended by 12 leaders of the Christian Women's Ministry (CWM) of the Presbytery of Uitenhage. During this workshop, the training focused on how to identify a challenge within the community such as unity, gender-based exclusion, or leadership, as well as how to choose a relevant text. Furthermore, they were also being trained how to formulate questions that could be used during the DISCERNMENT part of a CBS Workshop.



- At Kariega
- 15 April 2023
- [Read more](#)

Presbytery of FISH RIVER CWM



This CBS Facilitator's Training Workshop, which was being held at URC Immanuel in Cradock, was facilitated with leaders of the Christian Women's Ministry (CWM) of the Presbytery of Fish River.

- At Cradock
- 22 April 2023
- [Read more](#)

Presbytery of PORT-ELIZABETH CWM



- At Gqeberha
- 17 May 2023
- Read more

At this CBS Facilitator's Training Workshop, a group of CWM Leaders of the Presbytery of Port-Elizabeth have been trained how to use CBS as a useful tool for addressing challenges in the community. They explored in detail how to work with different groups, and how to frame the context, as well as the challenge. Furthermore, they also focused on the do's and the don'ts of facilitating by being aware of the power they have as facilitators.

Presbytery of George CWM & CYM

The CBS Facilitator's Training Workshop at URC KwaNokuthula in Plettenberg Bay, was different from the usual ones, as it has been facilitated with seven leaders of the CWM, and four leaders of the CYM, simultaneously. This resulted into a dynamic cross-generational conversation between the leaders. Some aspects discussed, were the importance of setting up a venue, understanding your audience, and formulating questions to stimulate conversation within the group.



- At Plettenberg Bay
- 20 May 2023
- Read more

Presbytery of GRAAFF-REINET CWM



- At Graaff-Reinet
- 16 June 2023
- [Read more](#)

This CBS Facilitator's Training Workshop, which was attended by six CWM Leaders of the Presbytery of Graaff-Reinet, took place at the URC Graaff-Reinet Congregation. The focus of this workshop was on facilitating CBS, and formulating questions that can be used for the DISCERNMENT part of CBS. Furthermore, they have also discussed the different aspects of facilitation with a group.

FOLLOW-UP TRAINING OF CBS FACILITATORS

Three workshops have been facilitated by Rev. Babalwa Sifuba. Two of them were facilitated with the Christian Women's Ministry (CWM) and the other one with the Christian Youth Ministry (CYM).

Presbytery of UITENHAGE CWM

Eight CWM Leaders of the Presbytery of Uitenhage has attended the CBS Facilitator's Follow-up Training Workshop. This workshop was being held at URC Ebenhaeser in Kariega. During this workshop, the focus was on facilitating CBS to a diverse group with regards to age, language, and literacy.



- At Kariega
- 17 June 2023
- [Read more](#)



Presbytery of PORT-ELIZABETH CWM



This Follow-up Training Workshop with the CWM of the Presbytery of Port-Elizabeth took place at the home of Mrs Fredericks, one of the attendees. During this workshop the group's main focus was on how to approach the challenge of leadership, as some of these facilitators were uncertain about whether they were ready to facilitate CBS, or not. Each of them had an opportunity to facilitate a short CBS, and to practice facilitating a CBS Workshop together as a team.

- At Gqeberha
- 12 July 2023
- Read [more](#)

Presbytery of PORT-ELIZABETH CYM



- At Gqeberha
- 29 July 2023
- Read [more](#)

This Follow-up Training Workshop at URC Motherwell in Gqeberha was attended by five members of the Christian Youth Ministry (CYM) of the Presbytery of Port-Elizabeth. The focus of this productive, fun, and thought-provoking workshop was on mental health and they read together the text of Matthew 11. Each attendee got the opportunity to practice by taking the lead in facilitating one of the different parts of CBS.

PLANNING & TRAINING

URCSA Port-Elizabeth's CWM & CYM FACILITATORS

On Tuesday 4 April 2023 the CBS project manager, Rev. Stephen Pedro, had a planning and training session with the CBS trainer, Rev. Babalwa Sifuba, as well as with the Christian Women's Ministry (CWM) and Christian Youth Ministry (CYM) facilitators at URCSA Port-Elizabeth in Schauderville, Gqeberha. A few facilitators, who could not be present in person, therefore joined them online.

The planning part of this session focused on the finalisation of the dates, venues, and facilitators for the Introduction to CBS workshops with the CWM and CYM of the presbyteries within the Cape URCSA Regional Synod that have not been reached yet.

The training part of this session focused on the facilitation, where we could learn a lot from one another, especially about the usefulness, and the impact of Contextual Bible Study (CBS) on leaders and their ministries.



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Abbreviations

- URCSA - Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
- CWM - Christian Women's Ministry
- CYM - Christian Youth Ministry