

CONGREGATIONAL WITNESS

1ST TERM 2023



NEWSLETTER



Our vibrant proponents!

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A message from our *Moderator*

Dearly Beloved

I firmly believe that every generation has its particular challenges. This is clear from an overview of our history. The question will always be: How do we respond to the challenges of our time, our generation? This is a question for individual believers as well as for the collective, the congregation or the church.

It is encouraging to see how our Ministry for Congregational Witness are responding to some of our challenges, helping our congregations to keep their focus on being the missional, caring and witnessing church that God is calling us to be. Fortunately, we live from the assurance that The One who has called us, is faithful, and has already provided us with all we need to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth for our generation.

The task of preparing theology students and candidates for the ministry is a special one within the tradition of our denomination. Men and women, young and sometimes a bit older, respond to the call to become ministers. Each one's call is personal and holy but also involves their families and the congregations who have nurtured them in the faith. They choose this path fully aware of the fact that they may have elected to go into other careers with much more benefits and opportunities. When they finish their studies and training many find themselves going through a wilderness experience of loneliness, and despair as they await a calling to a congregation.

Rev. Stephen Pedro has stepped into this pace with our *proponente* (candidate ministers) and has journeyed alongside them in an unprecedented way. We are immensely grateful for this and pray that the Lord will continue to use him and Witness Ministry in many more ways to address more of the challenges facing our beloved church. We would like to ensure our *proponente* and their families of our continued prayers and support as they await a call. May they find that God is not just a God of the outcome but of the journey as well.

I would like to appeal to all congregations without a minister who are in a position to call one to seriously consider doing so as soon as possible. I would like to appeal to all presbyteries to ensure that they guide these congregations towards this goal. We have reached a point where we need to look at new ways to address this situation which has become critical in many presbyteries.

I would like to bless you all with the priestly blessing:

The Lord blesses you and keeps you, the Lord makes his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turns his face toward you and gives you peace. And I place the Name of the Lord on each one of you and bless you.

Dr Lelilyn MacMaster

llmmacmaster@gmail.com



A message from our *Manager*

Dear Beloved

Congregational Witness is one of six task teams of Witness Ministry and therefore our cooperative task is to execute and embody Witness Ministry's vision to serve and witness, together, in and from Africa. More importantly, our special focus is the witness of the congregations of the member-churches of Witness Ministry. Because of this interconnectedness between the witness of the church and congregations, and the lack of capacity within URCSA Cape, Witness Ministry and Congregational Ministry agreed that this Task Team and its manager will focus on the work and mandate of Congregational Ministry.

Congregational Ministry's general mandate is to take part in building up the congregations of URCSA Cape for their service and witness. We do this by giving advice regarding Congregational Ministry's policy, doing research, and sharing information about Congregational Ministry, serving as a connection between congregations and presbyteries with regards to Congregational Ministry's activities, and initiating conversations with congregations and presbyteries about the work of Congregational Ministry.

Importantly, the building up of congregations is aimed at the members of the church. Hence, Congregational Ministry's special focus is to support the equipping of the members, and more especially, the offices of elders and deacons, for service and witness.

Therefore, the main task of Congregational Witness and its manager is to assist Congregational Ministry to attend to its general mandate, and more specifically to assist with the execution of its support of presbyteries and congregations for their task to equip the members of congregations to build up the church and to serve and witness.

Although our support and accompaniment take place on three levels, namely synodical, presbyterial and congregational, and in various ways and forms, it is interconnected and integrated. Hence our support programme for our ministerial candidates (proponents), as mandated by the synod, is part of our integrated support of presbyteries and congregations. Whilst our focus in this edition, is on the work we do for and with our proponents, it serves the general mandate of Congregational Ministry, namely to advise, inform, and support our presbyteries and congregations.

May this newsletter not only serve the general mandate of Congregational Ministry but, as our moderator reminded us in the foreword that every generation must face its own challenges, may it also contribute in a small way to the empowerment of our congregations to face the challenges of our time.

Rev. Stephen Pedro
stephen@kaapkerk.co.za

WE WELCOME NEW ADMIN COORDINATORS FOR CONGREGATIONAL WITNESS & CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY

LEONÉ PRINSLOO

The past few months we were privileged and grateful to welcome Leoné Prinsloo as our new **admin coordinator** for Congregational Witness at Witness Ministry. Please feel free to contact Leoné at 076 330 1527 or e-mail her at kga3@kaapkerk.co.za.

*At your
service!*



AIDAN WINDVOGEL



We also welcome a now familiar face at Congregational Witness, Prop. Aidan Windvogel who is taking charge of the **admin tasks of our CBS project** until the end of the project on 31 August this year. Please feel free to contact Aidan or e-mail him at apwindvogel@gmail.com.

The office's
contact
number is
021 957 7184

SUPPORT AND ACCOMPANIMENT: SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR OUR PROPONENTS

Meet our proponents

For the past few months, the Congregational Witness office has focused on the Support Programme for our Proponents. Before sharing what we have done for and with our proponents, let us introduce them once again so congregations who are in the process or planning to bring out a calling, are familiar with our candidates for the ministry's contact information. You can also read more [HERE](#).



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WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR OUR PROPONENTS

Building morale



The purpose of our Support Programme for our Proponents is partly to look after their well-being during the period of waiting on a call from congregations. We do this by having regular contact sessions and an annual retreat. The goal of this retreat is to encourage and to further assist with preparations for the ministry.

This year our annual retreat took place from 15-17 February 2023 at Gourikwa Reserve, Gouritzmond. All proponents were invited but at the end of the day, only thirteen of the seventeen proponents joined the breakaway/isolation.

Proponents described the retreat as uplifting and encouraging. As one proponent noted, it is especially reassuring to come together with your peers, who are in the same boat as you, and to be reminded that you are not alone during this difficult period of waiting and trusting.

Another proponent mentioned the privilege of being mentored by colleagues, with years of experience in the ministry, for a few days, focusing on their different contexts and cultures informally. These differences inform and shape their particular approaches to ministry, so these differences should not only be highlighted but also celebrated.

While we tried to involve our leadership by inviting our moderator and scribe to participate in this retreat and provide some kind of assurance and guidance to the proponents, they were unable to attend due to their busy schedules.

We, however, did get hold of Rev. Dr Tommy Solomons, moderator of the Rhenish Church, who accompanied us on the journey and addressed the importance of the ecumenical role of the local congregation and its leadership.

Revs. Bennie Roelfse and Charlton Crowley from the Presbytery of George also joined our retreat. They addressed the proponents on the topic of marriage, the role of the pastor's spouse, and parenting.

We also touched on themes like the role of the church order, the congregation's responsibilities towards the presbytery and the synod and the relationship between the local Afrikaans and Xhosa URCSA congregations on community level.

We also made time to rest, to socialise and strengthen the bonds of friendship. Read the report [HERE](#).



Front FLTR: Props. Ntsika Tyityi, Aidan Windvogel and Jayson Gribble. Centre: Props Ashwin Thyssen, Pieter Windvogel, Noxolo Fihla, Rachel Lindereth, Zolani Nene, Michael Wildeman and Rev. Stephen Pedro. Back: Props. Dewald Jacobs, Lyndon Mactavie and Monwabisi Koyingana

WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR OUR PROPONENTS

Training to assist and train



FLTR: Props. Thyssen, Wildeman, Linderoth and Gribble

The second part of our Support Programme for our Proponents is to train them to assist the MSS, and to train CBS facilitators.

What a joy!

On 19 January Rev. Pedro had a follow-up training session with the proponents at Communitas in Stellenbosch.

It was attended by nine of our proponents and Dr Andries Daniels also joined them supportively.

The focus of this training was the assessment phase of the guidance process with vacant congregations, specifically the "Missional board game" as one of the practical exercises that are done as part of the phase with congregation leaders.

To get a sense of how it would work, we played the board game together, and then talked about the purpose of the exercise - how, where, when, and with whom.

On January 30 there was a follow-up CBS training at Communitas in Stellenbosch with Thandi Gamedze from The Warehouse. The event was attended by eight proponents and also Dr Andries Daniels of URCSA Rhenish Stellenbosch Congregation.

The CBS focused on Matthew 6:9-13, 'The Lord's Prayer'. The theme was: transforming communities.

It was a blessed and instructive CBS training!



WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR OUR PROPONENTS

Training to assist and train



FLTR: Prop. Aidan Windvogel, Mr Charles Cowan of URCSA Bishop Lavis, Caroline Powell of The Warehouse and Rev. Stephen Pedro

On 14 March we resumed our training sessions with our proponents. We continued with our weekly Contextual Bible Study (CBS) Train the Trainers sessions at Witness Ministry's office in Bellville.

In attendance were Caroline Powell of The Warehouse and Mr Charles Cowan who is a member of URCSA Bishop Lavis, and an expert in Christian education. We are privileged to have them joining our course and we look forward to working with them.



WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR OUR PROPONENTS

Training to assist and train



We not only train our proponents to assist with the training of CBS facilitators but they are also equipped with other ministers to support the Minister in Synodical Services (MSS), Rev. Stephen Pedro, with the accompaniment of congregations. They are specifically trained to assist with the assessment phase of the accompaniment process.

We took on the challenge to have these training sessions on a bi-weekly basis and since February this year, we have already had three training sessions with ministers and proponents – on 22 February, and on 9 and 22 March.

All three training sessions took place at our Witness Ministry's office in Bellville. It was really a blessed experience to engage in the difficult questions regarding the challenges being faced by our congregations, with both pastors and proponents.

Hopefully, this venture of having our proponents and pastors engage with each other will not only contribute to the deepening of our discussions but also help to prepare our candidates for the ministry that awaits them.



9 March at Bellville

FLTR: Prop. Monwabesi, Rev. Francis Samson, Rev. Kobus Frantz, Prop. Michael Wildeman, Prop. Aidan Windvogel and Rev. Andries Daniels. At the back is Rev. Pedro.



WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR AND WITH OUR PROPONENTS

Our Proponents' Fund and placement

We remind our congregations, who are planning to or are in the process of calling a minister, about our Proponents' Fund. This fund was created to assist congregations who are currently in a healthy financial position to call, but know they will have to work hard to honour the contract with the newly appointed minister in the future, and still take the step in faith to call.

With the help of the fund, we will subsidise the new minister's salary for a year at the rate of R60 000,00. If the congregation decides to start the journey of missional transformation, we will even consider assisting for another year. Congregations can send a letter requesting assistance to Rev. Stephen Pedro at Witness Ministry.

As of now, we are supporting a proponent who is working in two "vacant" congregations for a fixed period of time. So, this option is also still available to congregations who are planning to call a minister in the future but need pastoral assistance for six months or a year. They can then ask a proponent to work as an assistant preacher ("hulp-prediker") and we will also consider assisting them from the Proponents' Fund. Although the congregations who call a proponent will get preference, we would indeed assist congregations for short periods of time whilst funding allows.

We also request congregations and members of our DRC-URC family who would like to support this fund to also get in contact with the Witness Ministry office. But most of all we welcome your prayers and words of encouragement.

Rev. Stephen Pedro

SUPPORT AND ACCOMPANIMENT: SUPPORT OUR PRESBYTERIES

Information workshop with Stellenbosch presbytery



On 11 February, Rev. Pedro facilitated an information session with URCSA Cape Regional Synod's Presbytery of Stellenbosch at URCSA Rhenish Congregation. Thanks to the groundwork that has been done in advance, the session was attended by all nine congregations, namely Kylemore, Franschhoek, Idas Valley, Stellenbosch (Cloetesville), Vlootenburg, Rhenish, Simondium, Koelenhof, and Kayamandi. Altogether 20 representatives attended the information session.

"The main goal of our mission is to place service and witness at the centre of the ministry of congregations. Our mission, as such, is to journey beside congregations to adapt to a culture of being a missional church," Rev. Pedro explains. Read more about it [HERE](#)

Information session at the meeting of Ebenezer presbytery

Left: Revs. Stephen Pedro and Danny Bock

Right: Rev. Xolani Zwelindawo (URCSA Nyanga) and Rev. Colin Goeiman (URCSA Claremont)



"On the 25th of February, Rev. Danny Bock and I had the privilege of facilitating a session at a special presbytery meeting of the Ebenezer presbytery. They've requested us to address the presbytery on the challenge of "vacant" congregations, the Proponent's Fund and the option of proponents working in congregations for short periods of time whilst they are waiting to be called.

This was an incredibly fruitful session and meeting. We as facilitators have been enriched and impressed by the input of the representatives of congregations. This once again confirmed the importance of engaging with our leaders of congregations because the answers to our challenges are among us as we engage with the ministry of our congregations and the Word of God, whilst allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us in discerning the future of our URCSA congregations."

SUPPORT AND ACCOMPANIMENT: ACCOMPANIMENT OF CONGREGATIONS

URCSA Robertson congregation starts with assessment phase



We want to test and implement our adjusted strategy with regards to our accompaniment process with five to ten congregations so that they can become our inspirational stories to share," says Rev. Stephen Pedro, manager of the task team Congregational Witness, and this is exactly how Congregational Witness kicked off this year's programme, starting the accompaniment process with URCSA Robertson.

After the newly-ordained URCSA Robertson minister, Rev. Randow Jantjies, and the church council decided that they wanted to formulate a vision and mission for their congregation and that they need the accompaniment of Congregational Witness towards their goal, they contacted Rev. Pedro.

Rev. Pedro designed an accompaniment process for the congregation which starts with the assessment phase, which includes the facilitation of the Missional Board Game with the congregational leaders.

Rev. Pedro then assigned two URCSA proponents, Prop. Aidan Windvogel and Prop. Rachel Linderoth to do the Missional Board Game with the church council and the convenors of the various ministries within the congregation. It took place during the weekend of 10 to 11 February.

"The workshop was attended by 21 eager participants from the various congregational ministries, including Rev. Jantjies," says Prop. Linderoth. "The group's excitement could already be sensed at registration."

After the group was welcomed by Rev. Jantjies, he opened the workshop with a prayer, inviting God into the presence of the programme. It was followed by Dwelling in the Word, facilitated by Prop. Linderoth. The text was Psalm 119:1 to 8 (from the Revised Common Lectionary).

"The text was very appropriate since the Missional Board Game helps the congregation to determine where its ministry currently is, and then to look into the future to where they want to be in five years' time," explains Prop. Linderoth. "The attendees enjoyed participating in this session, which prepared them for the Missional Board Game that followed shortly after Dwelling in the Word."

Directly after Dwelling in the Word, Prop. Windvogel explained to the participants what the Missional Board Game is about. He then facilitated part one of the Missional Board Game, assisted by Prop. Linderoth. The second part was facilitated by Prop. Linderoth, assisted by Prop. Windvogel.

The workshop was a huge success and ended with a prayer by Elder Reginald Piedt, followed by a vote of thanks by the scribe, Mr Hennie Arendse.

Contact Rev. Stephen Pedro at stephen@kaapkerk.co.za for more information.