

Life at Volmoed is always exciting and this year it is extra exciting as it is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its founding in April 1986. Forty years ago Volmoed began as a Place of Healing, Justice and Reconciliation, and the journey has been long, challenging and one of endless adventures, challenges, transformed situations and lives, and much joy in this beautiful, peaceful and safe space. There is a special event this month bringing Founders and Friends to celebrate all the goodness and beauty and transformation over the years. Other celebration events include an art exhibition, a conference of 'Festival of Possibilities' for life in community, a week of art workshops, a colloquium partnering with Stellenbosch University and more.

Meanwhile 2025 ended with our annual Christmas carol picnic singalong including photo booth and a raffle with prizes from generous neighboring wineries, restaurants, art shops, B&Bs, that make many people happy and raise funds for Volmoed and the township band who provide the music.



Other musicians include the Volmoed youth drummers, the cute little Hermanus angels, and a visiting musical family. A perfect windless day made it a memorable event.

The people who visit Volmoed are a gift, and come from many different countries as well as Southern African countries and South Africa. The past few months have brought a rich variety of groups, enriching lives and focused on reconciliation, music, spirituality/mindfulness and beloved community.

The Tutu travel seminar came in January, bringing excellent speakers, challenging discussions and life changing



experiences. Then Volmoed rang with songs and music, when Bongani Music Experiences, came twice with two different groups of choirs from around the world. The choirs learn new songs from scratch in the indigenous languages of Xhosa, Zulu and Sesotho and were amazing in their new abilities! They participated in a choral workshop and sang as a mass choir



with the VYLTP young people at a concert at the end of the singing week, which was a huge highlight and joy for singers and audience.



Another organisation called 'Not I But We' brought survivors of gender based violence, abuse and addictions, on retreat to enjoy options for massage, art, journaling, counselling, guided nature walk, mindfulness, drumming, all in this beautiful safe space, and making an Earth altar to remind them of the special moments of the weekend.

There have been lots of Canadians! As well as students and visitors from the Netherlands, the US and the UK. Many of them visit the youth leadership and drum making project, and hear the story of drums and drum making from the young people. They



walk around Zwelihle and Mount Pleasant townships, led by the

young people, seeing local entrepreneurship, the vibrant culture and community, as well as the challenges of poverty in which people live. This is an important aspect of their experience of Volmoed, which gives people a safe space in which to reflect on the realities and stories of South Africa and its people and how it challenges them in their own lives and situations.



We are excited that progress has been made on projects that have been in the pipeline. There is a splendid new Tutu memorial rose garden, and fountain to celebrate our former patron, to be launched in April at the Founders and Friends event.

The alien trees that needed to be cut down, have been magically turned into beautiful long picnic tables and benches at a new picnic area near the river.

The digger loader was very busy in March and started to clear the last of the enormous amounts of sand that was deposited in the river during the 2023 floods, restoring the former pond.



All in all it has been an energetic start to the year as Volmoed celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and everyone is looking forward to upcoming celebrations and continued developments that will continue to make Volmoed the beautiful, peaceful space that draws people to come and do the work of reconciliation, finding meaning, healing in body, mind and spirit, and strengthen the bonds of community across generations, cultures, races, language and other differences.



THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY ONE WHO HAS GIVEN GENEROUSLY TO SUPPORT THE SIGNIFICANT WORK THAT HAPPENS AT VOLMOED. YOUR DONATIONS ARE MUCH APPRECIATED!

