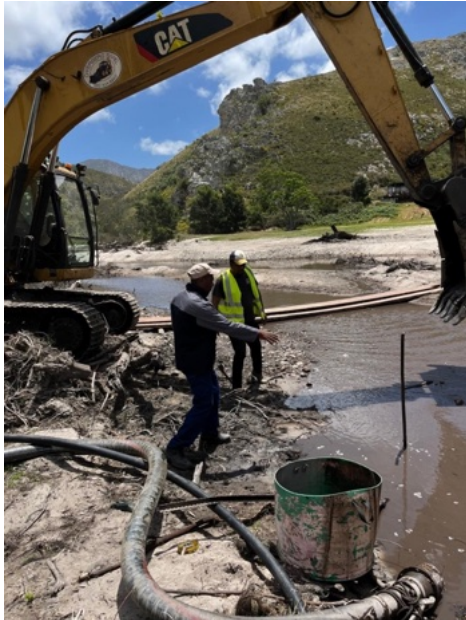


## Volmoed Retreat Center Report August 2024

**THANK YOU ALWAYS FOR ALL YOUR DONATIONS!**



Over the past few months we have moved into a cold and rainy winter, and all the dams are full. Fortunately, not as much flooding as last year, as we are still working to clear up that damage. Thankfully the sun comes out now and then to cheer us up after gale force winds and what feels like endless rain!



We have hosted many different groups in the past few months. These include peace building groups like Artisans for Peace,



who gather peace builders from different countries around the world for a time of support, nurture and strength for the important work they do; and the Indiana and Mid-western group of people working for peace in the Middle East. Other groups focus on learning and experiencing the history of South Africa

and reconciliation, on learning and experiencing the different cultures in South Africa, and loving the peace and beauty of Volmoed that helps them reflect on their experiences.



The Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation staff came for a staff team-

building retreat. The Tutu travel seminar group from the USA returned in August. They focus on learning about the legacy of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and on issues of justice, reconciliation and healing in South Africa. They spend time in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and then time at Volmoed to experience the local context of a small town, enjoy the beauty of nature, and reflect on their experience.



On Mandela Day in July, people were inspired by speaker Zelda la Grange, who was the private secretary to President Nelson Mandela for many years. This was followed by a drum circle that drummed for 67 minutes, to mark the 67 years of service it was estimated that he gave to the world.

Events with young people included a Taizé Youth day with workshops, time for reflection, and a walk to see the waterfalls; a visit from Marquette University students, and a week with the Volmoed youth leadership



program group focused on reconciliation, with facilitator and drummer Themba Lonzi.



A number of smaller groups came to Volmoed to focus on their particular training and needs, ranging from counselors at a

clinic, to a group of Benedictine monks from New York who came to meet with their companion brothers in this part of the world, to people doing first aid training, and a group who themselves lead retreats and wanted a time apart in quiet and beauty to rest, reflect and restore themselves for the work they do.





It is always a privilege to welcome and host so many interesting people and groups from local areas to all over the world. Volmoed Retreat Centre is unique and beautifully able to provide so much of what these very different groups are looking for.



Over the past few months, the Volmoed trustees have also engaged in facilitated workshops that focus on discernment of the future direction of Volmoed. This included creative work with beads, tooth picks and clay, to symbolize what Volmoed is and can be. Some beautiful work included a garden, tree, bridge, a river, hands, and other creative pictures that sparked some important conversations.

It made us realise the intensity of the last five years, including the Covid-19 years, loss of enormous trees that were old and diseased, the floods that were the worst in the last 100 plus years, had all left their mark. What a journey it has been for Volmoed and for so many connected to Volmoed. The current challenge is to increase the income through hosting more international groups, so that we can increase staff salaries to be closer to a living wage. Given all the increased costs of fuel, electricity and food over the last years, this has become essential. We may need to look for a second income stream in order to do this. The workshops led to excitement and some very good ideas to focus on for the future, so watch this space. The follow up to the workshops will be undertaken by the leadership team and the Volmoed Council.

Our favorite staff and residents moment is our weekly gathering on a Wednesday morning, when we have a contemplative, quiet time to reflect, sing, and sometimes share stories. It is a

time to catch up with news and to support and encourage those who are experiencing difficult circumstances.



Following a major gift from a benefactor and donations from many like you, the majority of the rental houses and several other buildings are now solar powered. This has helped to decrease our enormous electricity bill, which in turn will help to free up money for staff and other much needed projects. Gratitude to all who donated to this.

We are also happy that we have been able to provide internet and wifi at each of the resident staff houses on our property. Thanks to your donations, and David, a young volunteer here for six months, this has hugely improved the quality of our staff's lives.

As always, thank you all so much for your support. We could not do this important work without the support of so many. We appreciate you!



**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS MUCH APPRECIATED!  
THANK YOU!**