

Volmoed Retreat/Conference Center Report December 2025

Thank you! Dankie! Enkosi! Tathenda!

The past few months have moved us from winter into summer, and thankfully, Volmoed has hosted a number of local and international groups and visitors, younger and older folk, doing important work in areas such as leadership; gender equality; intercultural understanding in teaching; reconciliation and justice. Other groups came for a time of wellness, peace, healing and respite from the work they do with those who have experienced human trafficking or gender based violence (GBV). Some also visited our young people's leadership project that includes drum making, selling drums as a way of earning a small honorarium each month, and drum performance at local and provincial events.

A group of faculty and lecturers from different disciplines at the University of St Thomas, Minneapolis, USA, ended a two week South African trip at Volmoed with a few days of reflection. They grappled with their learnings and questions from the trip and how it would change their teaching and interaction with their students, including the generational and cultural differences between them and the students they teach.

Another group was 'Not I But We', a small Cape Town based NGO, who work with women who are survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence. Their board members, staff and volunteers came for their annual retreat. Their work is demanding as they listen intently to stories of deep suffering, and offer empathy and compassion, along with wholistic care, and

teach them to make a wide range of items that are sold to

provide a small income. Their motto is: 'Help survivors stitch their lives back together.' They loved their time here and return each year.

An intergenerational group did a meditation walk around some of the special sites and viewpoints at Volmoed, which was unexpectedly powerful and moving. They spent time in silence and



nature gazing, exploring the deeply meaningful and beautiful, peaceful spaces that make Volmoed so special.

Another group returned for their second residency of the Soul of Leadership program, by the Shalem organization in the USA. This brings together fourteen leaders from different sectors, from South Africa, Mozambique, Burundi, Kenya and Zambia. It was a privilege to host these leaders, who focused on Sanctuary and Rest, and loved exploring more of Volmoed in the beauty of spring.



The Volmoed Annual Meeting took place at the end of October, where the new interim managing trustee, Theresa Edlmann, was welcomed, as John de Gruchy, the chair of the trustee board, has stepped down. Grateful thanks to both of them for their service, and to three new trustees who are stepping into leadership, René August, Anton de Gruchy, and Fritz Hoelscher.

Volmoed is heading towards its 40th anniversary next year! In preparation there was a pre-recorded video, made for an online vigil including storytelling by various founders, of the founding and early days of Volmoed, along with photos of much younger staff and residents from forty years ago! It was inspiring!

Added to that is our gratitude for the new youtube channel that was created for the anniversary events, and has already made a huge difference to our communication abilities. Hundreds of hours went into the making of this and the video, and we are grateful to Rico and Mathilda for all their time and energy to make this happen.



The kickoff to the big anniversary included a reflective retreat for individuals, focused on Community, followed by a workshop of circle storytelling about Community. This was a way to explore the trends and impact of current contexts on the future of

communities like Volmoed. Those in the retreat and the workshop, spent a day with the Volmoed young people to hear their dreams and concerns about Community, to give context from the perspective of unemployed SA youth.



The first of the annual de Gruchy lectures, by John de Gruchy on 'Art, Soul, and AI', together with a wonderful exhibition of Isobel de Gruchy's art, made it all a full, rich and wonderful way to move into the fortieth anniversary of Volmoed. Gratitude abounds for an enormous amount of people who made all of this possible.



As ever, we are more than grateful for our staff. We are saying goodbye to Lucas, who has worked here for over twenty five years, and manages the complex irrigation and water filtration systems of the property. We said hello and welcome, wamkelekile! to Zandile, our new admin assistant in the front office. She is being onboarded this month by Esther, who shifts to a new position with responsibility for admin and logistics for programs and retreats. We are excited about these and other organisational changes at Volmoed, as the

leadership shifts from the Original Generations of people to New Generations of people who are younger and have energy to carry Volmoed into the future.



On a practical note, thankfully Volmoed was gifted a major donation that enabled the purchase of a new pickup truck to help transport staff and for use on the property. This was an urgent need and we are so grateful for the generosity that provided it.

Our very best wishes to you as the calendar year draws to a close and a HUGE THANK YOU! to all of you for your generous donations throughout the year, and especially to those who gave on Giving Tuesday. May your end of year celebrations and holidays bring you great joy and the new year lead you forward into peace, truth and beauty.

A HUGE THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY ONE WHO HAS DONATED TO VOLMOED THIS YEAR. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

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