

## **Year End Newsletter - Highlights from the year!**



It has been a busy year for the Southern African Region, and as 2017 comes to a close, we want to take a moment to share with you some of the highlights and stories from the year. We hope you have valued being a part of the URI family this year, and we wish you a Happy Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy Kwanzaa with many blessings for this festive season and the coming New Year!

### **Southern African Regional Assembly in Malawi 2017**

**We Unite - Connecting the CCs**

**Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All**

This year, the Southern Africa Regional Assembly was held in Blantyre-Malawi and hosted by the Country Coordinating Committee in Malawi represented by Fr. John Ng'oma, Jacinta Chisi, Annie Mchikoma, Geoffrey Manasseh and Shadreck Ngulube. The Regional Assembly took place at St John of the Cross Centre for Retreats and Spirituality in Chirudzulu District whereby Fr. Paul and Fr. Ephraim provided everyone with wonderful hospitality. There was 17 CC's who participated in the regional Assembly in which six represented South Africa, one from Mozambique and eleven were representing Malawi. The Southern Regional Coordinator, Karen Barenchen gave warm welcome to all CC's and embarked with them through a wonderful journey of teaching and sharing

their activities and future work. Here are some highlights from the four days together. To read the full report, follow this link. [Read Report of Regional Assembly.](#)



Left: The Malawi Coordinating Committee welcome us.

Right: Fr John, Berry and Malwande lead an interfaith opening prayer.



**Celebrating new CCs** - We were very excited to be able to formally welcome 3 new CCs, with a certificate and a welcome pack. These went to Nasolo CC and the Youth Today Foundation CC from Blantyre Malawi, and then to the Linda Tucker Foundation CC, from South Africa.



Left: A special visit to Limbe Mosque

Right: Enjoying ice cream together after our interfaith tour.



## What has bubbling through the year within the CC's

From the beginning of the new until now our CC's have been involved in many different activities. Here are some stories to be share with everyone.

### *Gifted for Good Holiday Bible Club*

The amazing young leaders from Gifted for Good led two weeks of holiday club in their community - being the role models to the young children and teaching them about adopting positive habits. This was done in collaboration with the Anglican Church and USPP CC. Here are Taks and Jabu leading the session, follow their page - Gifted for Good for more updates.



### *“Cleaning for the Elderly Day” - the youth of Schaumberg POP CC doing their bit for Mandela Day!*



For Mandela Day on the 18th July (Nelson Mandela's birthday), all citizens are encouraged to do 67 minutes of good in their community. The young people from the Schaumberg Parliament of the People CC decided to host a “Cleaning for the Elderly Day” and spent their 67 minutes cleaning up their community and assisting the elderly. Well done team!

### *Messages for Sarajevo - Global Staff Meeting*

We made a video which was shared at the URI Global Staff Meeting in Sarajevo, with messages from different CCs - [watch the video. click here!](#)



## *Malawi CC's Collaborate for International Day of Peace*

“Together for Peace, Respect, Safety and dignity for all”- The International Day of Peace celebrated in Malawi community with the collaboration of Matindi CC, Karonga CC, YASED CC, Blantyre CC, Nasolo CC, Nkhudzi Bay CC, Mangochi CC and Lilongwe CC.



The event was held in Mangochi, Nkhudzi Bay in which government officials, URI Board Member, religious leaders, Civil Society Organization, T/A Nankumba, Councillors honored the event with their presence. The event focused to promote Peace within Malawi community and was celebrated with traditional dances, Choir, Praise Freedom Band, Drama Group, Poems to emphasize on Peace across Malawi!

[Read the full report.](#)



## *Reading the Nuclear Prayer for International Day of Peace*

On International Day of Peace, the URI Southern African Office staff gathered to read the Nuclear Prayer, written by the Right Reverend William E. Swing, President and Founder of the United Religions Initiative. Find out more:

<http://www.nuclearprayer.org/>

[Click Here to watch the Video](#)



## *Launching Girls Not Brides Campaign in Mozambique*

On 22nd October 2017 soon after returning from the URI Assembly for CC leaders and youth leaders, which took place in Malawi early October, AMIMAMO made a visit to Mbetazigone community where the first projected projects are to take place. The visit was possible with the support from the Catholic University of Mozambique – Lichinga Extension as one of our local partners who offered a school bus to the village.

At this meeting, the aim was to inform community members about AMIMAMO project developments, to awaken and maintain confidence of the community, to give feedback from the youth leadership training in Blantyre, and to launch the Girls Not Brides Campaign. The main focus of this campaign is to instruct parents to deny early marriage and to incentive their daughters to go school. AMIMAMO CC is working towards building a school to accommodate all the girls in the village of Mbetazigone. [Read the Full Report Here](#)



## *Yara and Karen meet with the awesome team from Gifted for Good*

Hosted at the Turquoise Harmony Institute Offices, Yara and Karen met with the members of Gifted for Good CC to learn more about their work and connect with them.



## *Unite and Share for Peace and Prosperity (USPP) celebrate Human Rights Day and Christmas with their communities*

One of the many things USPP does incredibly well is put smiles on the faces of people in need in their communities. Around important events such as Human Rights Day and Christmas, USPP brings together its network of volunteers to give back and celebrate!



### **Highlights from our Youth Development Team**

So this year, as the Youth Development Coordinator, I (Sarah) set out to start collating an accurate representation of who the young people are in the different CCs, get a sense of their involvement and leadership capabilities, run a series of context-specific interfaith dialogue and skills trainings, and by the end of the year be able to identify key leaders from the different CCs and regions who would be able to step up as young leaders in URI and take this work forward.



## What has happened:

We've run three major events this year, a Human Rights Day Interfaith Youth Leadership Session in the Gauteng Region, a follow up longer 3-day training in June, and then a 3-day training in Malawi, with youth representatives from the different CCs there. From these three main events, we've been able to connect youth leaders within the CCs, raise awareness of youth-related issues, and establish a clear strategy for leveraging the youth agenda in URI across the region. There have also been various follow up initiatives that have come from these initial trainings. Here are some of the highlights from the trainings:

### Human Rights Day Interfaith Youth Leadership Session (March 2017)

- 28 participants
- 5 CCs/organisations represented (United and Share for Peace and Prosperity CC, Parliament of the People - Schaumberg CC, Gifted for Good, The Muslim Youth of South Africa, and FEED)
- Covering topics such as the difference between a debate and dialogue; what kind of space we intend to create when doing interfaith work, that allows people to feel safe but also learn; reflections on our own spiritual journeys, and how to listen with an open heart and an intention of building trust, respect and compassion.
- One key outcome: The youth from the Schaumberg CC, Winnie and Thabo, were invited to join the leadership committee of their CC, and were given free learnerships to develop their skills after this event! [Read More about this event.](#)

### 3-Day Interfaith Youth Leadership Training with Gauteng Region Youth CCs (June 2017)

- 25 Participants
- 7 organisations represented: Youth ChangeMakers Parliament, Connecting the Dots CC, Gifted for Good, Kundalini Earth, Schaumberg Field of Dreams CC, South African Indigenous Peoples Association (SAiPA) and the Muslim Youth of Southern Africa.
- Facilitated by Ignatius France (from GOAL CC) and Sarah Oliver
- Variety of creative methods and interactive activities used.
- CCs shared their work, best practices and areas of growth
- Whatsapp group formed to keep communication going, and share further opportunities
- [Read More about this three day training.](#)



### 3-Day Interfaith Youth Leadership Training in Malawi (October 2017)

At the beginning of October, Sarah Oliver (South Africa), Nyambura Mundia (Kenya) and Geoffrey Manasseh (Malawi) worked as a team of 3 facilitators, to run a 3 day Interfaith Youth Leadership Training with CC young leaders in Malawi. Each CC in Malawi was invited to send two youth representatives to the training. The aim of the training was to begin to build the network of young leaders within Malawi's CCs to be able to work together and support each other, giving the youth skills in leadership, project management, interfaith dialogue and community

building, to leverage the voice of young people in their CCs and region more widely. The training happened just before our Regional Assembly, early October.

There were many learning moments that came from this experience, that have informed the conceptualisation and work of the youth development team in Southern Africa going forward. For the most part these were questions about context, how to balance the need for interfaith dialogue and understanding with skills trainings and the urgent needs of local communities, how to work with youth from varying educational backgrounds, and varying levels of involvement in their CC organisational structure, and to fully understand URIs role in committing to youth development and what this actually means in practice. What we know for sure is that through these trainings we've been able to identify key individuals who will be important leaders in taking this work forward with their peers and in their communities. We've also grown a much better understanding of the context and communities our CCs are working in, and where we might play a role. This has been a year of laying the foundations for the youth development work, and it can only grow from here.



## Follow Up Initiatives:

### **Thsegofatso (Kingston) and Thabo attend the LionHearted Leadership Training**

In a spur of the moment opportunity, Thsegofatso Makwe and Thabo Khunou, both whom attended the URI Youth Leadership Training in Gauteng, were granted the incredible full scholarship to attend a week-long leadership training with the Linda Tucker Foundation and the Global White Lions Trust. The Linda Tucker Foundation is one of our newest CCs and so it is incredibly special to be able to offer these opportunities to well-deserving youth through URI. Thsegofatso and Thabo captured their experience in a report, which you can [read by clicking this link](#). Here is a snapshot:



“Upon arrival the two met with their fellow campers and all were vibrantly welcome by Mama Agnes and her forever nurturing staff who was to take care of our wellbeing, Mama Linder Tucker and Mama Mae Tucker who made sure that it was easy to understand and adapt to the way of the White Lion. Campers were given time to settle into their rooms and shortly after Mama Linder Tucker introduced the 13 laws of a Lion Hearted leader which are, Origination, Appreciation, Communication, Nurturance, Radiance, Regeneration, Collaboration, Authentication, Co-Creation, Governance, Liberation, Aspiration and Elimination. This was our first gathering and these were to be the laws we have to adapt throughout the week and carry them through life as we share them with all those around us.

We had various game drives that we went on and all of them were to really remind us that the lion carries great strength, responsibility and is a lethal animal, but is also secret and that it carries a lot of messages coming direct from the source which is the Creator. One also learns through Linder Tuckers teachings that



in order for all to live in harmony as intended by the Creator we need to show love that is unconditional, light that is everlasting and truth that is absolute, this is evident in the yoga practices that we do every morning it brings light into ones heart and body, and also gets one projecting light back into the world where it is most needed.

In conclusion we are very thankful to all the people that made it possible that Thabo and Kingston make a spontaneous decision of leaving whatever it is they were doing in their lives and attend this course. The USPP, The URI and Mama Berry. We also thank Mama Karen for walking with us every step of the way ensuring that we got there safely and back. We are now living with the spirit of Tsau and it is a matter of sharing the light others around us.”



*Kingston and Jabu in action at the LionHearted Leadership Training*

### **Chikondi and Edgar share their learnings**

Youth Activities within AMIMAMO CC has been followed by Chikondi and Edgar whereby they made a visit to Mbetazigone village to shared what they learned at the URI youth leadership training in Malawi. During their visit they manage to work with the village Chief and 30 youth members. We acknowledge and appreciate you, Chikondi and Edgar, for taking the learnings forward in the way you have, and reaching more young people in your community!



## Geoffrey leads follow up training in Malawi, Lilongwe

Since the first training in Malawi, Geoffrey Manasseh has continued the work of youth development in Malawi in an intentional and caring way, committed to sharing what was experienced at the initial youth training with a much wider audience of young people across the country.

This past weekend, Geoffrey facilitated a two day training for the young people in his region of Lilongwe. He worked with other CCs in the area, YASED and Karonga CC, to bring together a group of 82 young people (39 boys and 43 girls). Timothy Duncan and Paulette Mwela, two young leaders who were participants at the first training, supported Geoffrey in leading this follow up training and sharing their knowledge and skills.



The Mayor of Lilongwe also attended the event to address the young people.

The two days were incredibly successful as the content was shared effectively, and everyone enjoyed themselves. The community also came together to support with providing food for the participants.

I'd like to acknowledge Geoffrey for his confidence, skill and leadership in running this follow up training - it keeps the momentum going from the initial training, and widens the reach of the work in a fantastic way. We are deeply appreciative of the work being done by him and his team!



## These are the international days currently observed by the United Nations for December 2017

- 1 December -World AIDS Day
- 2 December- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 3 December- International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 5 December- International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- 5 December - World Soil Day
- 7 December- International Civil Aviation Day
- 9 December- International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime
- 9 December - International Anti-Corruption Day
- 10 December - Human Rights Day
- 11 December - International Mountain Day
- 12 December - International Day of Neutrality
- 18 December - International Migrants Day
- 18 December - Arabic Language Day (Arabic)
- 20 December - International Human Solidarity Day



### Upcoming Religious Days

Dec. 1st -Mawlid an Nabi (Islam)

Dec. 8th -Bodhi Day (Rohatsu- Buddhism)

Dec.8th -Immaculate Conception of Mary (Catholic Christian)

Dec. 13th-20th - Hanukkah (Jewish)

Dec. 21th -Yule ( Christian)

Jan. 1st - Mary, Mother of God (Catholic Christian)

Jan. 1st-Gantan-sai (Shinto)

## Closing Remarks

To all our wonderful CC Leaders in Southern African Region, we say THANK YOU for all the extraordinary work you each deliver so selflessly through your CC's. May each one of you enjoy a well deserved rest and some quality time with your family and loved ones. URI Southern Africa is growing. Not only in the number and the quality of CC's coming on board, but in depth. It has been a joy to see the personal growth amongst the leadership developing, and new friendships being forged, as well as the gains made in truly beginning to grasp this concept of interfaith. We commit to continue to work with you and to support your progress wherever possible in the New Year.

To our global URI family we share our gratitude to you for all your support, especially the GSO, and my fellow RC's, who are always just a whatsapp away with any support we may need. It is a privilege to be part of this united, loving family that is based in loving appreciation for all LIFE.

The URI Cape Town office will be closed from the 15th December till the 8th January 2018. On behalf of Sarah, Yara and myself, we wish a you a Happy Hanukkah, a joy filled Christmas, and a blessed Kwanzaa! May Peace Prevail in your hearts, may peace prevail on Earth.

Karen Barensche  
Regional Coordinator