

# Via Christi Chronicle

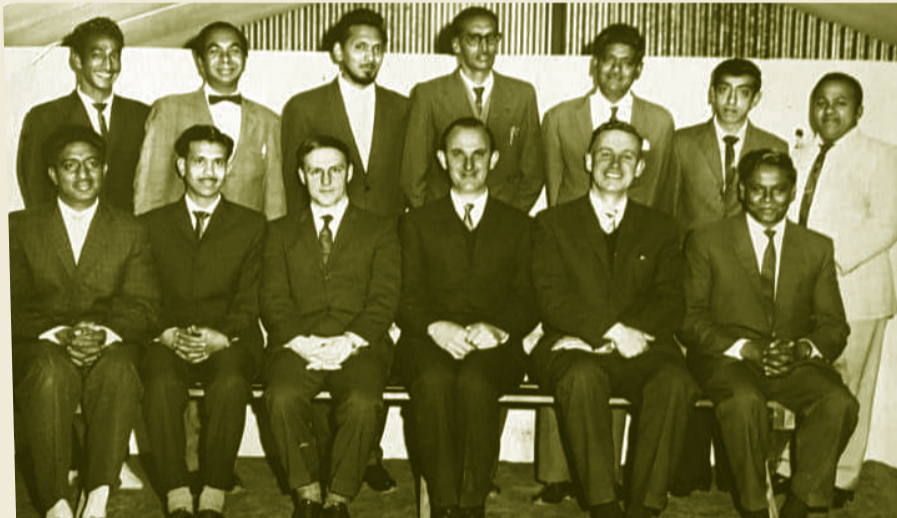
SPECIAL EDITION

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FLAMINGO STREET BUILDING

SEPTEMBER 2024

## In the beginning.

How it all started in a council house in Greyville



Council of the IRC - Southern Transvaal - 1964

Pictured are the Elders, Deacons, Ministers and Evangelists from Lenasia and Benoni.

Nestled in the heart of Lenasia (163 Flamingo Street, to be exact) the Via Christi Community opened its doors and has since stood as a testament to faith, resilience, and the promise of a better tomorrow. We began the Raising of the Steeple, in 1973 and on the 22nd of September

1974, congregants crossed the threshold and it held its first service with Reverend Shun Govender delivering the building's first message. Via Christi's congregation at that point consisted of those displaced by the Group Areas Act and made to worship out of a home in Lenasia, P27.

The roots of the church that would become the Via Christi Community extend to the suburb of Vrededorp in the late 1950s. Vrededorp, at the time, was a melting pot with a population made up of all races and creeds. The church was pioneered by a young pastor named Bunyan Peter and was composed mainly of extended family and friends. As the Group Areas Act began to take effect, the church was forcibly moved from Vrededorp and regrouped in the pastor's home in Bluebell Ave, in the early 1960s. While this initial church formed part of the South African General Mission (SAGM) - an evangelical missionary organisation that was primarily based on the South Coast of Kwa-Zulu Natal - in 1963 the congregation and leadership unanimously decided to leave the SAGM and joined the Indian Reformed Church (IRC).

At this point, the IRC was a "daughter" mission of the Dutch Reformed Church, in keeping with the segregationist policies of the Apartheid government. Upon joining, Rev. Chris Greyling, who was appointed minister of the IRC and Pastor of the P27 congregation alongside Evangelist Bunyan.

In 1969, Reverend Greyling accepted a call to serve as a minister in another congregation in the NGK. He was succeeded by the Reverend (later Professor) G.J.A. Lubbe (affectionately known to all as Pastor Gerrie), in 1970. He played a key role in starting (and completing) the construction of a new church building, which was inaugurated on September 22, 1974, for the preaching of God's word.

The first name change came in the late 70's - the IRC became the RCA (Reformed Church in Africa). Part of the land acquired was sold to the Johannesburg Institute for Social Services (JISS) to allow for the creation of a facility that would address community needs. In the early 1980s, the church participated in tent-making ministry. By 1986, it seceded from the RCA and changed its name to the Via Christi Community. In 1994, in a spirit of building church unity, the community joined the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA).



## A New Chapter

### Message from VCC Council

It is with deep gratitude and love that we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our church building. The building opened on the 22 September 1974, but we know it is not just a number that we are celebrating. It is each day of the past 50 years that we count as a blessing. Each day we were able to feel the Lord's grace shine in our hearts, even on the cloudiest of days. And we know that the same will hold true in the next 50 years.

Many wonderful things happened in this church building. All glory and honour goes to God.

What we should remember on this special day is that we go forward together. Those days when the sun is shining, and we feel joy in our hearts—those are easy days. But it's the dark days, the bad days that will arrive during the year, every year, that we must help one another to endure.

I hope you will take this message into the coming years. I believe we feel the same joy and gratitude as we greet tomorrow as a celebration too, a

celebration of our fellowship and our journey together in God's grace.

A special mention must be said, about the late Pastor Lubbe, Krish Govender and the rest of leadership at various times, who steered this congregation to where it is today. Pastor Lubbe was a loving shepherd that led his flock to celebrate many great milestones and many anniversaries.

Pastor Lubbe, thank you for teaching us the Lord's way. The years that we have spent together have been one the greatest life experiences that we will ever know. Pastor Lubbe sacrificed a lot to invest so much in our community. He was an example of the way, the truth and the light here on Earth and we thank God for his life and teaching.

Under his guidance and leadership we witnessed: the opening of the coffee house in 1976, where 300 cups of coffee were served on a Friday night; the Winterveld School Desk project with the assistance of many young people from various religious

backgrounds; the Time to Learn Project which started in 1975; the funeral of Prakash Napier, an Umkhonto we Sizwe operative; the 1987 National Union of Miners strike where 150 mineworkers were accommodated on the church premises; the anti-South African Indian Council Elections protest action in 1980. There are many other initiatives that the church was an integral part of, it is very difficult to convey the magnitude of something that has taken decades to build and achieve.

Our congregation has undergone major transformations over the last 10 years, especially since the passing of pastor Lubbe. There were moments in the recent past that challenged the congregation.

Tomorrow, we begin the long journey to the next milestone, the next anniversary. How shall we proceed? As a congregation of friends and believers, how can we welcome each day of the coming year in a manner that will best please God? How will we glorify God each day on our way to the next anniversary? Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words ring true;

*"The Church is the Church only when it exists for others ... not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others."*  
Letters and Papers from Prison' (1953).

Anniversaries are a time for celebration and a time for planning. Today represents a new beginning. This church celebration gives up the chance to not only look back at how far we've come as a church community but also to look forward to all the blessings the Lord still holds for us as we continue to do His work. Let us always acknowledge God's presence, in our lives and take comfort in his love.

This church has transformed our lives and will continue to do so as we enter a new season. May this anniversary represent a new and fresh beginning for our church as we build community bonds, leveraging and enhancing technology, making our church services more engaging for all ages especially young people, emphasising the continued growth and impact the church aims to achieve in the years ahead.

*"So we praise God that neither colour, class, gender nor culture determines who may belong to this church."*

Belhar Confession –Liturgical Version.

*As we begin a new chapter in our church, may our lives depict Christ's nature and His glory. May Via Christi Community Church continue to radiate the love of Jesus Christ to the world. "Do what is just, show constant love and live in humble fellowship with the Lord." – Micah 6:8*

# MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

## Rev. Vincent Kandan

It is with great joy and admiration that we join you in celebrating 50 years of faithful service and commitment to both the spiritual and social well-being of the community. Your dedication to justice, reconciliation and anti-racism is a powerful testimony to Christ's love in action. I've learnt so much through your leadership, namely; the late, Dr. Rev. Gerrie Lubbe. A humble giant, who was always willing to share his knowledge and wisdom in a very kind and gentle way. His teaching and lifestyle was outstanding and it made a great impact upon our lives.

The Via Christi Community has made generous investments of time, energy, resources and tireless efforts into the lives of the community. You have built and continue to build a strong, inclusive community that reflects the heart of God's Kingdom. As you continue to lead with compassion and

courage, may you experience abundant blessings and may your Ministry continue to inspire transformation for many more years to come. I would encourage you to continue looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. We would like to take this opportunity in remembering the faithful members of your congregation who have passed on.

I remember your tireless efforts and generosity in the early seventies when you started up "Time to Learn" assisting children in the community, especially from the "Two Rooms". Under the apartheid laws, the schools in Lenasia were for Indians only. Children from other race groups were not accepted in Indian schools. However, you pushed through many difficult hurdles including the apartheid Government – You invested your courage, time, energy and resources in assisting children of all colours and

creeds – transforming the lives and many children who found themselves in a hopeless situation – You helped children turn their lives around with the help of God! Many of those children were later accepted into schools in and around Lenasia and managed to complete their schooling. They are now serving in our community and around the world. You showed compassion and courage in the midst of difficulties. May God continue to bless you.

I can't forget the "Koffie Huis" ... Young people looked forward to meeting on Friday evenings for fellowship and coffee etc.. I believe that is where many young people found their lifetime partners. There must have been something in the coffee... Many pretty young ladies with high heels serving coffee! (LOL). And you continued with many other projects. Thank you.

I would like to end with the prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples. The Lord's prayer:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

With warmest congratulations and prayers for your continued impact in the community.

Yours in Christ,

**Rev. Vincent Kandan  
and Mrs. Indrani Kandan**

*Lenasia Church of the Nazarene*

## Bro. Pat Nagan

It is with fond memories that my mind goes back to a simple dwelling that functioned as the gathering place of the Indian Reformed church at P27 led by *Dominee* Greyling. Our brother Harry and sister Elizabeth Sombur stayed on the premises in those early days. When they moved to Heather Avenue the continued to clean the

church. On occasion my wife - Sister Ellen Nagan also cleaned the church.

My mother Aunty Latchmy Nagan was one of the early members of the church and remained with the church through the change of name to Via Christi and her passing into God's presence.

*Dominee* Gerrie Lubbe did us proud by being a White South African that that lived among us as one of us and wrote a book ...*the White Ant* that projected morals that reflected the Lord Jesus influence in his life

We pray God's continued blessing on Via Christi Community until the

Lord Jesus calls or comes on the clouds.

**Elder Br Pat Nagan**  
Functioning in a pastoral capacity.

*Lenasia Christian Brethren Assembly.*

## Pastor Russel Abrahams

I'd like you to imagine that I am a sixty-year old man who joined Via Christi in 1974 as a ten-year old boy. Here is my story.

When I entered the church on that first day, I was warmly welcomed and really made to feel at home. This has been my spiritual home for the last fifty years. What struck me first was that the man who became my pastor was an Afrikaner. There he was in the pulpit and there was his family with him.

I was born in Lenz and never experienced apartheid that I heard my parents talk about. I was sad and a little angry when my dad told me that

he could not sit down at White owned restaurants that dotted the city. Mom and dad told us that they had to sit on the upper-level of the double-storey bus after work and only the last four rows were reserved for those who were of colour. They were not allowed on the bus if these rows were occupied even though both levels were filled with empty rows. They could not swim in pools or play tennis because these were reserved for whites. They had to carefully read the signs before they entered any public place. Public toilets, parks, railway entrances, post-offices had clearly marked signs, Non-Whites and Whites. They talked about White policemen making sure that these strange rules were obeyed. And here

was this warm and truly loving Afrikaner family that led the church for the better part of my life and who never left. When I entered the real world after school, I experienced the racial prejudice my parents talked about but having the Lubbe family as part of my family brought balance and sanity.

Two years after joining the church, I stood on the front steps of the building on the evening of 16 June 1976 and saw Soweto burning. By this time, my thoughts were being shaped by the ideas of justice and equal opportunities for all. I was always helped by my Pastor's wise words and his courage in speaking against the double-standards

of the White church that paid his salary. I saw him renounce this salary and take on a job as a security officer in a Johannesburg building to support his family. I was filled with joy when a little while later he was offered and accepted a lecture post at a University. In my mind, this marked him as an intellectual, a pastor who taught truth, a leader respected by influential leaders of other faiths, a social activist but very especially my mentor and my friend. I celebrate our anniversary remembering him and thanking God for sending him to Lenz.

**Pastor Russel Abrahams**

*Christian Revival Centre - Lenasia*

## A Word from Mohambray "Monty" Naidoo

Dear Brethren: Let us keep this 50th Anniversary Real. The Wind and Waters of this World and Country has "Flowed" over All of Us. We are now in 2024.

The Via Christi Community has Battled with Personal Sin as well as Political

Sin: We have seen the Devil in many "Disguises", from Church Leaders, Political Leaders and even Amongst ourselves! Yet. There is a Big Yet:

Our Risen Lord And Saviour Jesus Christ, has Constantly been with us, through the Holy Spirit: He has not

Forsaken us, He has Been Faithful. So let us Rejoice! We serve a Living God!

We serve a Living Saviour! And most of all: He is Personal. He can Comfort each and everyone of us: no matter what the Circumstances.

50 years we are still standing: Not

because of Us but Because of the Triune God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit).

*"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" [Hebrews. 12 :1]*

## Ashraf Jooma

The Via Christi Community has been a positive feature in the lives of many young people in Lenasia. In the 80s many of us from the youth, were drawn to the Friday evening Coffee House where we were able to socialise and exchange ideas on many issues including education, culture, and politics.

These discussions contributed to our growing awareness of the injustices

and discriminatory practices that were prevalent in the community and the country. I remember the music, poetry, drama and lively discussions that contributed to our involvement in social issues and our participation in projects like the *Time to Learn* initiative that operated out of this premises.

VCC also allowed its premises to be used for many social events, including

funerals and memorial services for those who had fallen (from both the Charterist and Black Consciousness Movements) during the dark days of resistance to apartheid. Many people from this congregation became activists both socially and politically.

I congratulate the VCC for being a beacon of hope that had stood with the community against, apartheid for its

bold stand on human rights issues, opposition to oppression, exploitation and wars and hope that it will continue to be on the right side of history in these genocidal times that humanity faces.

**Ashraf Jooma**

**Editor: The Black Republic**  
*Publication of the Azanian Section of the Fourth International*

“The Way of Christ...” tracing the history of the Via Christi Community

# From Apartheid roots...

The Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk [NGK]*) is protestant church of the Reformation, that followed the teachings of John Calvin. It originated in Holland and was brought to South Africa by Dutch settlers who came to the Cape to set up a 'half-way-station' for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) – a private trading company that operated the sea route from Europe to the Indian subcontinent. The 'half-way-station' changed hands in a hostile takeover of VOC by the British East India Company (BEIC) resulting in a total annexation and colonisation of the Cape Colony by the British in 1795. After a brief return to the Dutch, Britain reannexed the Cape in 1805.

The Dutch settlers evolved into new identity (together with other European settlers like the French Huguenots) - the Afrikaners. The Afrikaners became dissatisfied with British rule and embarked on the “Great Trek” into the interior of Southern Africa - conquering the African indigenous people and claiming land as their “God-given” right leading to the formation of the Boer Republics. Central to this Afrikaner conquest of land and the building of the Afrikaaner nation was the NGK – a White, Afrikaans-speaking church - based on Christian Nationalism. The *Trekboer*, Gerrit Maritz, publicly vowed to build a NGK in Pietermaritzburg if God allowed them defeat the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River - that church still stands in Church Street today. After the Anglo-Boer War and amalgamation of the Boer Republics with the British Colonies into the Union of South Africa in 1910, the NGK emerged as the State Church, endorsing the National Party's 'Grand Apartheid' policy when it came to power in 1958.

The white government justified its racial policies of segregation and inequality using biblical references like the account of the Tower of Babel, and declaring their version of Christianity the state religion. Accordingly, different churches were set up for different races as the apartheid policy regarded whites as superior and black people unworthy to share facilities with them. In keeping with the 'four-nation theory' there was the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA)* for 'African' people and the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending Kerk (NGSK)* for 'Coloured' people. The white 'mother' NGK presided over the 'daughter' churches, dictating doctrine, policy and fiscal spending.

The need to establish an 'Indian' NGK was driven by apartheid policies like

the Group Areas Act, the Mixed Marriages Act (keeping a register of marriages to prevent racial 'contamination') - and the christianisation of 'Indians'. Afrikaners were genuinely rattled by the building of Mosques (especially in Marabastad) and Hindu temples (predominantly in Natal), and embarked on a mission to establish 'a work' among the “Indian” communities.

Thus in 1955, *Dominee* CJA Greyling (later Professor) was appointed as a part-time missionary to establish 'Indian' churches in the southern Transvaal and because of the success of the inroads he made, the position became full-time in 1957. He founded the congregation now called the Indian Reformed Church (IRC), together with Evangelist (later Reverend) Bunyan Peter in Lenasia in 1963. Prof. Greyling's views on the threat of Islam in South Africa can be found in his doctoral thesis, *Die Invloed van Stominge in die Islam op die Jesusbeskouing van die Suid-Afrikaanse Moslems (1976)*. The white youth and theological students of the NGK in Pretoria were particularly keen on the 'Indian' missions project and were instrumental in fundraising and building the mission. Rev. DP Bekker and Rev. PJP de Beer were selected to work with 'Indians' because of their Arabic language qualifications.

Over the following decade, the IRC grew into 3 congregations in the Transvaal (Lenasia, Actonville and Laudium), 2 in the Cape Province, and 6 in Natal. This was now a fully-functional, 'autonomous' daughter church in the NGK family. The general perception was the IRC is a Government church. At its synod in August 1978, the IRC was officially changed to the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), apparently to be less racially exclusive and to contextualise it away from India.

The Late 60s was an eventful time in the resistance to Apartheid, following the banning of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and the suppression of other progressives like the Unity Movement. The emergence of the Black Consciousness (BC) Movement radicalised many students, youth and workers alike. The ideas of leaders like Steve Biko and Stan Ntwasa inflamed the imaginations of cultural and social movements and revolutionary ideas ushered new thinking. The church was not immune to these influences and Black Theology was gaining traction within Christian society in general. Dr. Beyers Naude was a leading light in the NGK, hailing

from a *Broderbond* (a secret society for the advancement of Afrikaanerdom) background - he was a minister in the NGKA. His lone white voice reverberated across the country and the Reformed Church was starting to stir.

The tragic events of the Soweto Uprising of high school students on June 16, 1976 was an eye-opener for the Lenasia congregation of the RCA as it was also the turning point in South African history. Lenasia was shaken, many community members were harassed, arrested, charged and incarcerated. Opposition to the system and its evils grew among activists. Sadeque Variava, a Lenasia activist of the Black People Convention was charged and banned. The Lenasia congregation of the RCA had many educators and university students in its youth group, many were drawn to the community programmes of the church (Cross Inn Coffee House, etc.). There was a need to address the prevailing turmoil, and instead of shying away from 'worldly' issues, the church embraced the challenge. Under the leadership of the minister, Gerrie Lubbe and a willing and capable church council, the congregation identified with the oppressed, it boldly stuck its head out to make a difference. The church asserted its conviction that it had a historic mission to oppose the NGK and its support for apartheid.

As the 70's drew to a close, South Africa became a dangerous place for free expression - suppression was rife and communities were infiltrated by security police - there were spies everywhere. 1980 exploded with a national schools boycott. School children once again led the charge and the community was increasingly politicised. The church sought to support the students who were now in need of extra classes to compensate for the boycott and the *Time to Learn* project was hosted in the building in Flamingo Street, and many members became active participants and drivers of the programme. Many other community upliftment programmes were initiated and supported. The Lenasia congregation supported and was supported by the RCA congregations and their ministers, and other faith-based organisations.

Another prong in the fight against apartheid was the congregation's to raise these issues within the NGK and RCA structures. In 1982, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), met in Ottawa, Canada. The 'Daughter' churches of the NGK (RCA, NGSK,

NGKA) led a protest against the NGK. They declared that they would not partake in the communion service of the WARC because delegates of NGK were present. Interracial communion services were not permitted by the NGK and their participation in the WARC communion service was hypocritical. The WARC then suspended the NGK from the alliance and declared that apartheid is a heresy.

Back in South Africa, the RCA backtracked on its actions in Ottawa. The moderator of the RCA, Rev. K Moodley went as far to issue a written apology to the NGK in the national Afrikaans press. The RCA congregations of the Transvaal, Durban-South and the eastern Cape (5 of the 12) challenged this reversal as a betrayal. The majority of congregations supported the RCA stance, mostly because of their dependence on the RCA for financial support and the majority of RCA ministers believed apartheid was the 'will of God'. As a matter of principle Pastors Lubbe and Klippiess, decided that they could not accept the tainted money from the NGK and embarked on the 'tent-making-ministry' (a reference to the Apostle Paul's vocation as a tent-maker to subsidise his ministry). Over the next few years all the 3 Transvaal congregations and the Durban-South congregation adopted the policy. Gerrie Lubbe initially worked in the security department of the Munich Reinsurance Company in Johannesburg before he took up academic positions at the University of Pretoria. Together with the purchasing of the building in Lenasia, selling off parts of the land it was on, and financial contributions from the church members, the congregation moved from its apartheid roots to anti-apartheid activists.

The congregation, the church council and the members took responsibility for the running and management of the church to compensate for the full-time employment of its minister. After many attempts to win over the remaining congregations of the RCA, the Lenasia congregation was threatened with legal action to recover the church building. To add insult to injury, the RCA first defrocked Gerrie Lubbe, Klippiess Kritzinger and Charl le Roux and then withdrew the licences to be ministers. On 15 October 1986, the church left the NGK and with the unanimous support of its members, became the Via Christi Community.

*The rest, as they say, is history...*

## ... to Anti-Apartheid Activism

# Remembering a Giant

## A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF GERRIE LUBBE

*This article was first published in The Star Newspaper in January 2016*

“The Afrikaner anti-apartheid *dominee* and academic Gerrie Lubbe died on Saturday at the age of 74, after a battle with cancer. He was a retired minister of the Via Christi congregation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) in Lenasia, south of Joburg, where he had worked since 1970.

He grew up in Zeerust, in the North West, and trained as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church at the University of Pretoria in the 1960s.

He became known in Lenasia for his community activism and his public witness against the injustices of apartheid. The Via Christi Community, under his leadership, developed close partnerships with other organisations in Lenasia, like Time to Learn, JISWA and others.

Two events, in particular, caught the attention of the broader Lenasia community — and of the apartheid regime's security police.

In August 1987, during a three-week national mineworkers' strike, Via Christi accommodated about 150 dismissed mine-workers in their church hall.

In December 1989, when Prakash Napier, an uMkhonto weSizwe cadre from Lenasia, died in an abortive guerrilla attack, Via Christi agreed that he could be buried from their building.

From 1970 to 1980, Lubbe worked as a full-time minister in Lenasia, with the financial support of the white Dutch Reformed Church, but as his opposition to apartheid deepened, it became impossible for him (and Via Christi) to retain that financial link.

Via Christi was part of the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), the Indian “wing” of the Dutch Reformed Church “family”, and when the RCA synod approved the “tent-making” (self-



supporting) ministry in 1980, Lubbe moved quickly to find other employment in order to become a part-time minister.

He worked in the security department of Munich Reinsurance Company in Joburg for two years, until his appointment at Unisa.

When the Ottawa Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared theological support for apartheid to be a heresy in August

1982, Lubbe and two white colleagues in the RCA decided to hand back their licensing documents to the Dutch Reformed Church, in order to identify clearly with the RCA.

In a bizarre twist, the RCA leadership responded to that act of identification by declaring that the three ministers had thereby lost their ministerial status in the RCA as well. This caused a personal crisis for Lubbe, but the Via Christi Community rallied around him and his family, embracing him as their minister. That eventually led to Via Christi severing its ties with the RCA and becoming part of the URCSA.

Lubbe became known nationally and internationally for his role in the SA Council of Churches and for partnering with his friend Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu to set up a formal interfaith movement in South Africa.

Lubbe chaired the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP-SA) from 1984 to 1994. In that time, leaders of various religious communities raised their voices jointly against the tricameral parliament.

They also developed close personal friendships and an interfaith consensus on the kind of state that South Africa should be after apartheid.

The Declaration on Religious Rights and Responsibilities, produced by

WCRP-SA in 1992, contributed to the formulation of religious freedom clauses in the present constitution.

During the transition to democracy, Lubbe was involved in the National Peace Initiatives and served on the sub-commission for religious matters of the committee that arranged the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela in May 1994.

In addition to being a church minister and a community activist, Lubbe was an intellectual and an academic. He obtained a master's degree in Semitic languages from the then Rand Afrikaans University in 1978 on the image portrayed of Jews in the Qur'an.

In 1989 he completed & doctoral thesis in religious studies at Unisa on the Muslim Judicial Council - a descriptive and analytical investigation, exploring how the MJC applied Islamic law in the South African context.

He taught religious studies at Unisa from 1983 until his retirement in 2006, writing numerous study guides and supervising 16 master's and 19 doctoral students.

Lubbe was an influential public intellectual who helped lay the foundations of a just and inclusive democracy in South Africa, characterised by mature and respectful inter-religious relationships. In his 2014 autobiography, *Embraced by Grace: The Story of a White Ant*, he tells how he was warmly embraced by black Christians and people of other faiths — and how that transformed his life, drawing him into the shared human struggle.

*The Author Prof. JNJ “Klippiess” Kritzinger, is a Retired Professor of UNISA, a former colleague of Gerrie, both in the RCA and at UNISA, who was also subjected to the same persecution by the NGK as of Prof. Lubbe and together with Prof. Charles Roux resulting in their defrocking in the 1980's.*

## MESSAGE OF SUPPORT - Klippes Kritzinger

On this momentous occasion of the golden anniversary of the Via Christi Community church building, Alta and I wish to convey to you our heartiest congratulations, gratitude and blessings.

*Congratulations* for what you as a faith community managed to achieve over the past fifty years in this building. Because of who you are and what you

have done, this building has become a symbol of an engaged, compassionate and relevant Christianity. When I say “we congratulate you”, I mean it in its original Latin sense of “we rejoice with you” and share your happiness.

*Gratitude* for the sense of community and belonging that this building has given to us as a family – and to so many

families over the years. Through your faith and faithfulness to the gospel, this building became a space of grace that helped us to grow in faith, hope and love. Together with our daughter Marita, now living in Madrid with her family, we have been embraced, enriched and challenged in too many ways to mention.

*Blessings* is what we wish and pray for you on the road ahead. Over the years you invited us regularly to come and share the highs and lows of your community's journey. That has created an unbreakable bond of love. For the challenges facing you now as a faith community, we pray that the Holy Spirit will give you the courage, wisdom and focus to keep walking in the via Christi, the way of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## "VIA CHRISTI: a church that stood the test of time - Shaun Moodley

In a time when working with street children was unfashionable, Youth for Christ pioneered efforts in Lenasia CBD. Our first challenge was building trust with these vulnerable kids, often abused by community members and substance addiction.

After successfully establishing trust, we moved to phase two: creating a drop-in

center. Via Christi became a strategic partner, offering their church for this safe space.

Their commitment to social justice shone through:

- Progressive church council
- Two dedicated members on Amakhaya's board
- Unwavering support

Pastor Lubbe's words still resonate: 'We'd rather have broken windows than broken lives.' Under Joyce Naicker's leadership, we:

- Opened homes to shelter street children
- Reunited them with families
- Empowered education through Madiba Primary

These once-vulnerable kids became school prefects! I'm proud to have been part of a church that shaped my theology.

*Thank you, Via Christi, for fearlessly serving the marginalized.*

*I was Privileged and Humbled to be apart of a movement Called Via Christi.*

# A Reflection...

## INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT ABRAHAMS

**When was the VCC Church founded?**  
Before we became VCC, the church was founded in Pastor Lubbe took over from Pastor Greyling in 1970. The church was called the Indian Reformed Church which later became the Reformed Church in Africa. The church started before this date in Fordsburg. It held its first services, if I am correct, it held its services House No. P27, Greyville.

**What was the original mission of VCC Church?**  
To spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, teaching, worship and fellowship.

**How has the mission of VCC Church evolved over the past 50 years?**  
A presence in the area of social justice in South Africa and across the globe, and most recently speaking out against the atrocities committed by the State of Israel against the Palestinian people.

**What are some of the most significant events in the church's history?**  
Significant events include: Obviously the 25th and 50 anniversary. Building of Sunday classrooms, Opening up of the Coffee House in 1976 - 24 September. Building of the memorial wall. The most traumatic was the defrocking of Pastor Lubbe. The establishment of the community-based teaching centre, Time to Learn.

**How has VCC Church contributed to the local community?**

- VCC Church has contributed through Community Involvement, such as food drives, youth programs, or charity work
- Time to learn (1975)
- Mine Workers strike ( August 1987)
- Winterveld Program 1980
- Hosting a meeting –high suicide rate of young people in Lenasia
- Marikana and the deaths of miners at the hands of the SAPS
- Support for the Palestine issue 2024.

**What was a memorable moment or turning point in the church's history?**

A memorable moment was when Ps Lubbe was defrocked. He lost his status as a minister. Ps Lubbe's memorable line (at the time of his dismissal from the Mother Body of the DRC for being outspoken against the evils of Apartheid and its inconsistent message in relation to the Gospel of Christ): "...the people must then become the pastors..."

**Who were the pastors of the VCC?**  
Pastors of VCC Church have included

- Pastor Gerrie Lubbe (1970 -2007)
- Pastor Victor Lutchman (2007)
- Pastors Seth & Marisha Naiker (2021)
- Pastor Shane Louw (2023-)

*'Klippiers', Alex Bhiman, Victor Malope have also served the as co-pastors.*

**How has the church leadership evolved over the years?**  
There has not been any major changes to the formal structure of church leadership in terms of governance – Pastor as senior Council member, and a body of Council members duly elected through a democratic process by members of the church. The Sunday School continues. I am not sure about the Youth desk and Music Ministry at this time.

**Can you share a story of how a pastor or church leader made a significant impact?**  
One significant impact was when Elder Krish convinced the church council to commit to tithing, given our financial situation, so that ordinary members could also commit to tithing. Ordinary members took up preaching duties, visiting congregants and some at various times served communion when the need arose.

**How has the congregation grown and changed over the years?**  
The congregation has grown smaller. We are still a diverse community, Still seen as a Christian voice in the Lenz community. Many families have moved out of the area and are worshipping

elsewhere. Young people have also left for other places of residence and worship. The music ministry which once had a fair number of musicians, has shrunk quite dramatically.

**What activities are planned for the 50th anniversary celebration?**  
Planned activities include: Celebration of the event on 28 September 2024. Church/Community event – Guest Speakers Dinner etc. Invited past members who have left the church. Renovations to the church in preparation for the event. Honouring God for grace and mercy. Prayer meetings.

**Why is the 50th anniversary significant for VCC Church?**  
The 50th anniversary is significant because it represents the struggles we have come through and victories through the grace of God. We still exist as a church especially in this post-modern time where churches are emptying out. We are still striving to be salt of the earth, and being a witness to the salvific power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the witness of the Holy Spirit. To demonstrate the continuing presence of God in the congregation, the community and beyond.

**How can church members and the community participate in the celebration?**  
Members and the community can participate by attending events, volunteering, or contributing to special projects. One example is the Kanningen Trust that has sponsored a new front door for the Church. Previous members could and should feel the need to tithe – no matter the amount of the contribution to the wellbeing and upkeep of the fellowship in order for the work of God to continue in the community.

**What is the vision for VCC Church for the next 50 years?**

- Our vision includes the calling for a tent-making minister.
- To rebuild in terms of a Pastor and musicians.
- To allow the church buildings to be used for community-building projects.
- To rebuild a youth ministry for the future of the church

- To engage other churches and Christian leaders in the area for joint services, shared ministries and common programmes

**What are the current challenges facing VCC Church, and how are they being addressed?**  
Current challenges include finding a new pastor for the church. Run courses like the ALPHA course to get members and non members to have a sense of belonging. Consult with previous

pastors for guidance and support.

**What are some personal reflections from long-time members of the church?**  
The VCC is the place I worshipped at, the fellowship that introduced me to leadership, to the challenging words of Jesus, being the congregation I loved and still do, the place that married us as a young bewildered couple, where our children were born and baptised and took their first steps in the family of faith.

**How has the VCC impacted individual lives and families?**  
I am completely me because of this Church, and its committed leaders, its robust teaching, and the indistinguishable connection it forged between church and society, faith and duty.

**What does the VCC Church community mean to its members?**  
The VCC means a place to meet .I am thankful for the many blessings. Place where God's Word is preached, giving meaning to our lives.



### VCC MEMORIAL WALL

The VCC erected a memorial wall in 2006, on the church grounds, to honour and remember all members of the VCC. Families of loved ones that have passed on, mount plaques in their honour. We continue this tradition. The ashes of Gerrie & Jeanette Lubbe are also interred on the grounds.

## Adam's Blue Bus DAYA MOODLEY RECALLS



Adam's Blue Bus was truly a important character in VCC's history. In 1972 the church acquired a brand new bus, to further the church's youth work. The Ford Transit bus was initially white, but painted powder blue for some reason or the other. It was not only a means of transport, it was also was a source of adventure, fellowship and connection for the earlier members of VCC's youth. Adam's Blue Bus was the regular young congregation's transport, to the church on Sunday's and the prison on Fridays. Along with this, it took church youth as far as Durban and beyond. Gerrie Lubbe in his book, *Embraced by Grace - The Story of a White Ant* recalls:

*One Friday afternoon in 1973, I was assisting the young Bible College students who were running our junior youth club.*

*Suddenly, somebody came running, telling me that the youth gang, called The Bats, were intimidating people in a street not far from our church house. I got into our white Ford van and drove to the address that was given to me. When I got there, I was told that they had gone to the shops. At the shops, five members of the gang were detained by two young police constables who were waiting for transport to take the gangsters to the nearest police station. When I got out, the policemen asked me to take them and their detainees to Kliptown police station. I agreed and we all got into the van. We were about two hundred metres away when one of the gang members at the back loudly said: "You know, this is a wonderful van. On Sunday it takes people to church, and on Fridays it takes it takes people to jail." His words were greeted with much laughter*

# The VCC and Me... and many others.

## A PERSONAL ACCOUNT BY JAYSON ARTHUR

*In presenting a brief history of the Via Christi Community (VCC), I had to rely on my unreliable memory of some 52 years. For those who can recall much more than what I recorded, I do ask your indulgence for inaccuracies, exaggerations over emphasis and omissions. Of essence is the fact that I tried to outline the predominant features in the Church's history during the course of the last 50 years (in my case the period from 1971 to 1993).*

It is with pride and joy that I congratulate VCC on the occasion of our Golden Jubilee Celebration. As I put my thoughts on paper, I find it difficult to draw a demarcating line between the history of VCC and the community of Lenasia, and more specifically Greyville. We walked the dusty and muddy roads of Lenasia, be it to the shops, school and the church. The Mohamed Hajee Joosub Technical School (MH Joosub) which opened its doors in the same year as VCC, played a significant role in the many youngsters that would one day fill the pews in the church. The seeds planted in the 1970's and 1980's deep and unseen watered by sweat and tears blossomed into a kaleidoscope of indescribable blooms in every sphere of life in VCC and Lenasia. VCC served as a spiritual foundation in Greyville and Lenasia.

One of the luminaries who shaped the destiny of our church is none other than Pastor Prof. GJA Lubbe affectionately known to all as Gerrie. Gerrie and his wife Jeanette took over the reins from Ps Greyling in 1969. Assisting Gerrie was Pastor Bunyan Peter and his wife Margie. Anyone who remembers Pastor Bunyan, would remember the pastor who rode a scooter through Lenasia. When Margie passed away, he married Aunty Ester.

I first met Gerrie in January 1971 when I was an 18-year-old student at Fordsburg Teacher's Training College, through Mr Kemp - my lecturer. Gerrie became my friend, my pastor and my mentor.

During the cradle years of VCC our dedicated members came from humble beginnings, from our beloved Greyville, Thomsville (Two-Rooms), Extension 4, etc. Our pioneers came from truly humble beginnings, to name a few and their families Kalaka, Maraka, Maykie, Savita, Ranjit and Leela, uncle Diaar and aunty Diwali, uncle Bhana, Krish and Julie, Mr Kemp, Boya and Vijoo Jack, Rosy and Ganas, the Boston family, The Sombur family, the Brown family, Mrs Latchmy Nagan, the David family, Mrs Chetty, Mrs Ramsamy (the aunty who crocheted the Bible markers), Aunty Pat Abraham's, Alfred and Barbara, uncle Chetty (who fought in WW2), Mrs Pillay (Gairoon's granny), aunty Evie and Veronica (our organist), Sew and Belinda and Brian Peters. These Pioneers were then followed by the next generation.

VCC was originally a church which was housed at P23 Greyville opposite the swimming pool. We purchased the present property (Flamingo street) and the property behind us which we sold to JISWA at cost. This building opened its doors in 1974. We were members of the

synod of the 3 Indian Reformed churches in the old Transvaal (Benoni, Pretoria, and Lenasia). There was a time when we went through turbulent waters. Synod decided that our three pastor's, Klippiess Kritzinger, Charl Le Roux and Gerrie Lubbe will do tent-making ministry and not get their salary from the NGK. They were defrocked by the NGK. True to the humility of who Gerrie was, he worked as a security officer with Uncle Ranjit at a company in town. Krish Govender, our chairperson, made it very clear to the council that we will have to do our bit, now that Gerrie is a full-time worker like us. Gerrie later lectured at UNISA.

Another hurdle we faced was the ownership of the church building. Although it was bought by VCC, the property fell under the custodianship of the NGK. We met with the lawyers in Pretoria and got the building onto our name, and true to our actions, one Sunday morning a young RCA Pastor from Durban came to church and said that he has been sent as the new pastor of our church. We cleared-up the misunderstanding with him which resulted in us severing all ties with the NGK and we then proceeded to join the Uniting Reformed Church in SA.

It would not be fair of me if I did not mention that VCC found itself having to stand up during a time when the political volatility of the country was at its height. Many will say that VCC was a political church. Allow me to correct that misconception, in my observation VCC was not a political church, it has always been "The Church". VCC stood up against the wrongs of the day, whether it was political or even humanitarian. VCC has always been the agent for change according to scripture. I recall two separate incidents. The first, when a group of miners were thrown out of work and had no place to go. Uncle Ranjit was the Chairperson at the time, and it was decided that we would allow them to stay in the church. Our community took care of them for a few weeks. The second - I recall two youngsters who were political activists who passed away. No one was prepared to assist with their funeral. Krish who was the Chairperson at the time decided we would bury them from our church. VCC stood up.

In spite of what we faced we always found time to fellowship and share in beautiful times at church.

The Sports days where the entire congregation participated in athletics, volleyball and soccer. We generally always enjoyed our sports days with a welcomed braai. VCC was very active in the many programs that it facilitated within the church. These programs included the

following:

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our children took part in Christmas plays. Nihs was our superintendent. Some of our teachers included Mannie, Wayne, Renika, Sunkgar and Elsie. Elsie's class built a model of Noah's Ark which was presented to Mrs Pillay and it was housed in a show glass and left in the Mother's room. She also produced the Passion Play where Theo Bhana played Jesus, and Kevin and Keenan Moodley played the two thieves. The Children were always an important part of the church and Gerrie even had a Children's slot in the Sunday morning service. He would capture their young minds with Christian stories, one being pilgrim's progress which the children thoroughly enjoyed.

### THE CROSS-INN COFFEE HOUSE.

This project will never be forgotten by the youth of that day, 1977. It was the brain-child of Gerrie and good old Ben Richard. A group of us spent a planning weekend at a conference centre in Rosettenville. It was hard work. We got 10 cable reels from the Post Office next door, knocked off the one side and we had our tables. Our hall was set for the evenings with lanterns at each table. The youth in Lenz had nowhere to go on a Friday night. What better place to go to have fun and free coffee. We poured out as many as 300 cups of coffee a night. We spent late nights sometimes and we even had to force them to leave as late as after midnight. The programme was packed full of fun, with skits, competitions, comedy and music.

Danny David was our very own Elvis Presley who took the stage regularly. Gerrie was the Cross Inn's news reporter. Sing '77 saw the musical talents of the Lenasia youth, which was won by none other than Robert Abrahams. Who can forget Gerrie and Yasmeen with their rendition of "there's a hole in the bucket - dear Liza".

As the evening grew we would spread ourselves amongst the tables and evangelise with Christian topics, counselling and inviting all to come to church, seeing many giving their lives to the Lord. I recall one evening when we were visited by the Bats, a group of gangsters from Lenz and their leader Boykie the Bat and the Owls (another gang). The movie, the *Cross and Switchblade*, was playing in some cinemas, and these gangs wanted to imitate the gangs in that movie. We knew there was going to be trouble. Adam and I spoke to them and the evening went well with no trouble. When the coffee house finally

poured its last cup of coffee, a chapter in Lenz came to a close. We had so many of the youth begging us to reopen.

### CELL GROUPS

We had many cell groups spread across Lenz. Joe and I conducted cell groups at the following homes: Boya and Vijoo, Brian Peters, Vivian and Sandy, Sue and Belinda, Diwali and Diaar, Mrs Pillay and Ganas and Rosey.

### CLEAN UP SESSIONS ONCE A YEAR

Not only did we have our services in the building, but we also took care of the building. This was also a time to fellowship one with another. The congregation would meet once a year over a weekend, and we thoroughly clean the church and repair the building. One such repair, if you look at the windowpane on the far left, you will notice it is of a different shade. This can be credited to Adam and I, who changed that pane. The only person to notice the difference was Krish.

### LADIES MEETINGS

Ladies met once a week at various homes and the church. Jeanette provided transportation for our sisters. Reason for this - no lady was able to drive.

### BAPTISM

The infant baptism was so special however mention must be made of the baptism of Norman Govender. Norman wanted to be immersed in water. We found ourselves questioning the time of the year. It was in the middle of winter, we arranged for the Baptistery at Faith Church down the road. It was a very cold day. Norman and Gerrie braved the icy water of baptism. We witnessed this baptism in the comforts of our overcoats, hot water bottles and hot coffee. It was cold enough for poor Gerrie to turn blue when he came out of the water.

### WINTERVELD

Our church took care of a school in Winterveld. We donated books, clothing and groceries to this very poor community. On one occasion we were tasked with transporting desks to the school. Tanga (Tommy) was the driver of the truck, Joey (Govender) and I were seated in the cab. On our way, climbing the Maraisburg hill, the truck lost its traction and suddenly began rolling backwards. It started gaining speed in reverse. The one mind was saying "jump out before it's too late". Tanga skilfully steered the truck, Joe giving guidance from the passenger side, and by the grace of God I managed to slip it back into gear. It finally dragged and came to an abrupt stop. Needless to say we jumped out, hugged each other with brotherly love, and thanked the Lord. Tanga, Joey and I successfully delivered the desks to the school.

In conclusion, it is extremely difficult to determine what is important, what is unimportant, what to include and what to exclude. But of one fact I am certain, and I stand unshaken and unmoved.

*JESUS HAS BEEN OUR GUIDE AND STAY OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS. MAY VCC ALWAYS STAND UP. GOD BLESS VCC.*



# The VCC – The embodiment of Liberation Theology in theory and practice.

BY NEESHAN BALTON

In 1974, Lenasia was reaching its 20th year of existence, with many having arrived there from 1955 onwards. The enforcement of the group areas act in Sophiatown commenced the beginning of large numbers of people settling in the Indian group area.

The building of churches, mosques and temples were prioritised by the new arrivals. This is a history that is still to be recorded. These places, together with the schools and sports associations gave the area a sense of community.

Behind the VCC building is the Jiss Centre. Today its quietness belies its vibrant history as being the centre of much the political life of Lenasia. The sharing of a common boundary wall did not prevent the two sites from being places that would contribute immensely to the politics of the day.

In 1982 a group of activists formed the Lenasia Youth League (LYL). I can recall many meetings of the LYL taking place at the VCC. I can recall us working over many nights on writing articles for the LYL publications there.

While I cannot recall all the details of how it came about, Pastor Gerrie Lubbe took a group of LYL activists to a place called Winterveldt in about 1983 or so. There we distributed clothes that we had collected from our annual food and clothing collection – *Operation Winter-warm*. But the trip was more than that. We had to help assemble school desks and also saw a bit of what the homeland area looked like. That visit opened up our eyes to the reality of life for the majority and profoundly impacted our consciousness.

It laid the foundation for my organising work in the various informal settlements in the south of Johannesburg throughout the late 80's and early 90's.

In 1985 or 86 we were invited to meet with the youth wing of the National Party at the VCC. Their delegation was led by Marthinus Van Schalkwyk (who was to later become the NP leader) The meeting had hardly commenced when the place was surrounded by the army and security police. Needless to say, the NP youth disappeared extremely fast, and we were never to meet again.

In 1987 the VCC allowed hundreds of mineworkers who were involved in the National Union of Mineworkers strike to stay on the premises. This went on for a few weeks and must have caused a huge disruption to normal church activities. A group of activists worked with the VCC and the NUM to ensure that the workers were fed and had access to medical workers when needed. This was a proud moment of solidarity in action by the VCC and many in the Lenasia community.

In 1989 the church became the venue for the funeral of Prakash Napier. Prakash was a MK soldier who died in a bomb blast at Park Station together with Yusuf Akhalwaya. Family concerns prevented his funeral from leaving their home.

The funeral of Gerrie Lubbe at the VCC was the last event that Ahmed Kathrada and Archbishop Tutu were at together. That they were there to bid Gerrie farewell was testimony to his remarkable work of building a church that went beyond its religious calling. It was a tribute to it being a centre that placed social justice and unity at the forefront of its work.

It was therefore not surprising that the VCC displayed banners of solidarity with the people of Palestine when the genocide in Gaza commenced in October last year.

Long may the VCC continue being a voice and space that will champion the issues of truth, justice, and reconciliation in South Africa.

*Neeshan Balton is the Executive Director of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation and an activist.*

## At the Heart of Community Struggles

The Via Christi Community (VCC) in Lenasia stands as a proud symbol of the theological rejection of Christian nationalism, racial discrimination and apartheid.

Led by the indefatigable Pastor Gerrie Lubbe since the 1970s, the VCC adopted a principled religious stance against racial oppression and inequality. It rejected any theological justification in favour of White minority rule over the Black (African, Coloured and Indian) majority in our country.

For his opposition to apartheid, Pastor Lubbe and others like him such as Dr Beyers Naudé were ostracised by and isolated from their own Afrikaner community. It was a heavy personal sacrifice they made to stand for the truth. In the VCC, Pastor Lubbe and his wife, Jeanetta, found their real family based on the principles of social justice and the common humanity of all, irrespective of race, religion, culture and language.

The VCC was a home to many activists from the Congress movement in Lenasia. We will never forget that in August 1987, the VCC opened its doors for 21 days to over 150 mine workers who were on strike for a living wage and were kicked out of the mine compounds. Here they slept and ate and found comfort and solidarity.

We cannot forget that when the Lenasia Youth League hosted its Youth Festival in December 1981, the VCC accommodated over 50 youth activists from Cape Town for an entire week.

We remember in December 1989, when Prakash Napier, an MK cadre from Lenasia died in an abortive guerrilla attack, the VCC agreed that he could be buried from its premises.

We recall that the Progressive Teachers' League was formally established in September 1986 in the hallowed walls of the VCC.

In more recent times, it was at the VCCC that the first community workshop against corruption and state capture was held in 2018.

There are countless other examples of the contribution of the VCCC and its leadership in attending to the needs of ordinary residents of Lenasia. In the late 1970s, it played an instrumental role in establishing the Time-to-Learn Project for poor students and in later years, it established the Amakhaya Rethabile Children's Home for abandoned African children.

Lenasia would have been the poorer without the VCC. We pay tribute to the men and women - past and present - who built this institution and placed it at the very centre of community struggles for justice and human dignity. May it be strengthened for many more years to come. May it continue to service all of humanity.

**Ismail Vadi**  
*Former ANC MMC - Gauteng  
Retired teacher & activist*

## THE TIME TO LEARN

BY JERRY WAJA

The *Time-To-Learn* (TTL) project was started in this Church. The TTL Project was based on one of the basic tenets of Black Consciousness - Self-reliance.

As a member of the South African Student's Organisation (SASO), I was compelled to start the project; assisted by other teacher-trainee students. My compulsion was given impetus after attending the Viva Frelimo Rally held at Curries Fountain Stadium in Durban.

A masters student at WITS doing community research in the sub-economic area of Lenasia came across 67 children of school-going age not at school because their parents were not "Indian". This church provided the space for 67 children of school-going age to receive elementary learning in English literacy and numeracy to be admitted to Flamingo Primary School and, to be promoted twice a year.

The 'project' was successful for the majority of children aged between 6-9 years. Although it was not as successful for the older children, it did provide them with basic skills to enter the world of work. The TTL Project created an enabling environment to provide

young and old with the sharp political awareness needed to engage in revolutionary community activity, and to demand and work for decent human living and working conditions.

Later as a homework centre the TTL Project provided the space and opportunity for critical thinking and political activity - this activity included mutual respect for each other's religious affiliation without prejudice - of course, some religious zealots didn't take kind to this new mood to sweep not only Lenasia but also the whole of Joburg and the country as a whole.

It was a revolutionary project that won the admiration of revolutionaries throughout the world

One person who was awe-inspired is Paulo Freire, a renowned Brazilian educator, philosopher and social commentator.

*Jerry Waja is the founder of the TTL project, a former member of the SASO and BPC, a founder member of AZAPO and together with other BC activists, founded the Abu Avasat Institute for Nation Building (to counter racism and tribalism and religious chauvinism).*

## THE MINE WORKERS OF STRIKE 1987

While little in the way of easily accessible reporting of the mine workers' strike of 1987 is available, there are quite a few high-falutin scholarly articles that do exist. One piece of history that appears to be missing in these sources is Via Christi's involvement. The strike was in response to mass mine lay-offs and lasted for 21 days, from the 9th to the 30th of August. During this time, around 150 mine workers from Carletonville found themselves stranded. The Via Christi Community opened its doors to the mine workers; providing them with food, shelter, sanitation and spiritual comfort for 30 days. Beyond "being the Christian thing to do", this act was in solidarity with black workers being subjected to the inhuman labour practices of the Apartheid regime.



### Congratulations Via Christi Community – MY SPIRITUAL HOME

As one of the foundation members I feel privileged to be connected to Via Christi Community. I was young teenager who grew up in Via Christi Community. Via Christi Community for me is My Church, My friends, My family, My Support, My Counsellors and My Link to the Community. Thinking of the Church my mind goes back to:



- Gerrie and Jeanette Lubbe – our spiritual father and mother who God used to lay the foundation of this SOLID church.
- Coffee Room – A project that connected us as congregation and also connected us to the diverse community of Lenasia.
- Church Council – God inspired Church Council that lead the spiritually developed of the leaders which filtered to the congregation and the greater Reform Church family.
- Conscientious Objection – Gerrie refusing to receive money from the perpetrator/endorsees of Apartheid. Thus entering into the world of Tent-Making Ministry.
- Breaking away from the Indian Reformed Church and birth of 'Via Christi Community'. The inevitable split within the our church when breaking away from the DRC was a very sad situation.
- The role and support of the Miner's Strike and other social justice events.
- Holiday Club – connecting the children for a day of safe fun and scripture Contextual Theology – relevance of the church politically in the community. Christmas and Sunday School end of year event.
- Social events – community lunch, bible study groups, prayer meetings and the various other programs in the church that assisted us in our spiritual growth.



Sadly it is a time when we remember members who are departed and we remember all their contributions to Via Christi Community.. 'God be with you till we meet again'

May God continue to work in mysterious ways and use his mighty works to draw souls to the kingdom of God. May he always uplift our leaders in grace, wisdom and knowledge.

God Bless - [Rahman] Adam - Sydney Australia

## MESSAGE OF SUPPORT

### Clarette Lubbe



When I do grief counselling, a question that I often ask people is: "What do you think your loved one (deceased) would tell me about you and how you contributed towards his/her life?" People seem to be slightly surprised by the question since the focus is usually on how the loved one (deceased) contributed towards their lives. I was wondering what my parents would say if they were asked about how the Via Christi Community contributed towards their lives. Both of them spent their last days working on albums with clippings and photos about my dad's story. The biggest part of that story without a doubt is the story of the Via Christi Community. I remember their account of how they left Lichtenburg in tears (where my dad's ministry started) after receiving the call to come to Lenasia. I also remember their account of tears of belonging when they were literally (and in so many other ways) embraced by the congregation when my dad was defrocked. There is a beautiful quote about community: "One of the beautiful things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing" (Jean Vanier). My dad would, with delight, share how Via Christi is a 'people's church' and not a 'pastor's church.' He would with great joy tell stories of how members of Via Christi would give expression to their understanding of belonging to Jesus and serving Him and sharing the role of pastoral care and interpreting the Word. In my dad and mom's last days, it was the people of Via Christi who would bring them treats and love and care. It was the people of Via Christi who would made them feel that they belong, they mattered and that their lives made a difference.

Chris, Herina and myself have received the life transforming gift of having been part of the Via Christi Community and seeing how God's divinity becomes visible in people. Knowing where we come from, we are now able to pass on those gifts and love that has been given to us. May we all continue to be 'People of the Way', the way of Christ.