

NEWSLETTER

January to April 2021

Picture of Upington Methodist Church



Greetings from Sunny South Africa

Time seems to fly, even under Lockdown

As we put pen to paper to produce this Newsletter, we are now on level one, the closest to normalcy. We are excited by being back in church, worshipping the best we can. At least we are no longer restricted to numbers, but to the building's capacity. We have indeed come a long way even the last three to four months have seen a lot of changes.

January was the month we so much looked forward to as most failed activities of the past year were re-scheduled for the first quarter of the year, including those abruptly stopped when the new covid strain surfaced in November 2020

We have all remained optimistic! Having conquered uncertainty of March to September 2020 and the discouragement of November, we so hoped for positives. So January felt like a big let-down in more ways than one, but our spirits were not crushed. We kept striding on, the stronger steadying and even or even lifting up the weaker. Covid 19 brought our communities together indeed.

Dee had been working on a safeguarding plan and Policy during the latter part of the lockdown period, and January was the month to introduce the project to the circuit management team. The hope had been that a training programme be implemented, starting with the leadership team, then youth leaders, followed by Sunday school practitioners and eventually completing the training by the weekend of 20th February. This never materialised for two reasons. First of the new strain of Covid 19 meant reverting back to a more stringent level where all gathering was once again banned. The second reason was that the Superintendent, who had planned these dates, as well as the Bishop, were both incapacitated since November 2020.

So January and February for Dee meant once again working behind her desk, concentrating writing up Bible Study notes for individuals and small groups, a project she had been working on alongside the Safeguarding one. Periodically, she would still work on packing food hampers and distributing them to the needy who often come to the Manse.

In the meantime, Freddy continued with looking after the Circuit pastorally and administratively. Virtual services via Facebook and whatsapp continued. Pastoral conversations over the phone had long since replaced pastoral visits, and had indeed become a necessity. With ministerial cover inadequate due to the size of the circuit itself, 240km radius, and the continued absence of the superintendent, it's amazing just how church members rallied together. Ladies distributed food hampers to needy households in the community. Local preachers volunteered to take some of the load of covid related funerals that were threatening to overwhelm Freddy. Police and Health officials were always at hand and willing to help during these funerals. A technical team of skilled young man took the

responsibility of all communications, meetings and church services. Never before had we witnessed such profound co-operation and working together the circuit was experiencing. What was expected to be a difficult January and February turned out to be a blessing for the Circuit. God's grace is all we will ever need and we can indeed do all things through him who strengthens us, so says the scriptures.

March did mean more work and travel for Freddy, but far from it being daunting, it was an exciting time. The churches were open once again, and better still it was level one, the closest to normalcy, meaning even church attendance was no longer even limited to fifty, but to the size of the church. Freddy was therefore able to travel further out into the circuit, grouping two to three churches at each service in order to share communion with as many as possible. Most parts of the circuit had not had a communion service in more than six months. However while preaching to visible congregations, we still virtually reached out to those who could still not physically attend church.

Below we share, in pictures, some of the events of March and April



Confirmation



Confirmation



Baptism



Dee with Women's Fellowship Leaders



Baptism



Palm Sunday

Freddy and Dee Tkavarasha
Mission Partners in the Methodist Church Southern Africa