

Whilst many of us are familiar with the LINK's ongoing outreach work with young people, the Christian Education aspect of its work is less well known. We are privileged, in this edition of e-Moho, to share with you Joseph's report, which we hope you will find encouraging, providing many topics for prayer.

Joseph writes:

The year 2020 is regarded by many as a wasted year globally because of the advent of coronavirus pandemic. Plans made before Covid-19 suddenly had to be dropped to say the least. It brought about lots of frustration, confusion, and depression. Throughout 2020 the main focus was fighting for survival. Many people lost their jobs through retrenchment. We helplessly lost lives of our loved ones. Like many NGOs in Lesotho, LDL (Lesotho Durham LINK) had to scale down its activities and remain with few staff who kept the Link afloat. What follows below is what was achieved within very limiting government restrictions and between lockdowns when staff were then working only 50% of the time and in shifts. Most of it was done between April and July. Ministry of the Diocese was seriously affected too and parish life came to a stand still with many plans being postponed or cancelled – baptisms, confirmation, conferences and the election of the new bishop to mention but a few. We are therefore very grateful to God that through our friends and partnership in the LINK, we still managed to touch lives in some small ways but which positively impacted God's people.

Lay ministers workshops

We managed to hold empowerment workshops for key Lay Ministers in all our archdeaconries. - Material covered in our workshops addressed the actual needs expressed by each area as to make it relevant and helpful. - Key training issues included – conducting church services in the context of Covid -19, sermon preparation and delivery, leadership skills, the role of a Lay Minister in local church, the church and development, ... - Lay Ministers are key to the life the church in Lesotho as they are the ones who shepherd congregation Sunday by Sunday in the absence of priests. Therefore, they need continual encouragement and empowerment . - Thanks to SSM UK for fully sponsoring all Lay Ministers training workshops throughout the Diocese!

Diocesan Clergy Conference

One of the major challenges we in Lesotho is working with clergy who are either untrained or semi-trained theologically and otherwise. To date the only mitigation to this is offering equipping seminars and conferences annually when funds permit. - Last year we afforded a 3-day training conference for all archdeacons, rectors and other parish priests. It was truly a refreshing weekend for priests who otherwise lived in very depressing contexts of Covid-19 in their respective parishes. - The focus of the conference was on unity, effective leadership, healing and preparing for elections of the new leadership in the diocese, doing ministry in the era of Covid-19, taking responsibility of our future church. - We were served by very experienced speakers from different denominations and organisations including our own Rev. Fr R Bianchi from Durham speaking via zoom on Collaborate Leadership. I must say 2020 Clergy conference was one of the best we have had in a long time where clergy freely connected and said what was in their minds and tried to work for UNITY together.



Discipleship workshop

This is purely a discipleship programme. Its focus is on the fundamentals of the Gospel, witnessing and helping believers to grow and become disciples of disciple others. - Of the 38 participants who attended our trainings, 32 of them were Lay Ministers coming from different archdeaconries. We were happy this as these are leaders of local churches and will help in training others. - Parishioners who attended were excited as well. Rooted in Jesus programme also touching on skills to evangelise different groups in the church. Many thanks to SSM UK for sponsoring for sponsoring all the Lay Ministers who attended the workshop.

Theological Education by Extension

This is another important programme suitable for Lay Ministers. It takes 3 years for one to complete as distance learning. Courses are done in Sesotho Language covering a wide range of subjects – Pastoring, Salvation, Church Admin, Prayer, Preaching, etc. - The Programme is given by GEM and we managed to enrol 21 of our Lay Ministers sponsored by SSM UK - There's so much excitement over this opportunity to study theology in one's mother tongue, especially for the semi-educated rural Lay Ministers



Fellowship of Vocations

After a few years of not conducting FOV Seminars for all sorts of reasons, the year 2020 brought a smile on many faces in the Diocese. - The seminar revived hope in many youth who are Lay Ministers in their Parishes and are keen to test their calling to priesthood or religious lives - Thanks to both Anglican and Catholic nuns and monks availed themselves to facilitate sessions in this Seminar where 45 participants out of 60 were already serving as Lay Ministers.

Purpose Driven Church seminars

We managed to send Lay Ministers to these seminars which were held in collaboration with PDC/PP - They were trained on how the local church can reach out to their immediate communities both with the Gospel and social needs – agric projects, caring for the sick, growing the church holistically.

Electing a new Bishop

Please pray with us that we may finally be able to choose a LEADER of God's flock here in Lesotho. We have 8 candidates for this position from whom the Diocesan Bishop will hopefully come. Seven are gentlemen and one lady. Six are from our own diocese while two are from the diocese of Free State in South Africa (it is anticipated that the elective assembly will be held on 23rd and 24th April)

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