



UJAMAA CENTRE

UJAMAA NEWS



Earth Theology: Gunther Wittenberg Lecture

By Nozipho Dlodlo On the 26th of September, the Ujamaa Centre organized the annual Gunther Wittenberg Lecture. We had Mrs Monica Wittenberg, the wife of the late Gunther and other family members who were glad to be a part of the great day. As our guest speaker we invited Rev. Dr. Andrew Warmback who was accompanied also by his wife and members from the St Paul's Church in Durban where he is currently serving as rector in the Anglican Church. His most valued credentials include that he is a doctoral graduate of University of KwaZulu Natal with a thesis entitled "Constructing an Oikothology". He also has a book published by Cluster Publications titled "The Church and Ecological Justice". The audience on this big day included St Josephs students, Seth Mokiti-mi Seminary Students, Geography and Theology UKZN students but we also had activists from community and religious leaders attend in their numbers. We left the lecture empowered and ready to contribute to the preservation of the earth and the ecosystem. Rev. Dr. Andrew made it clear that change would only come about if all stakeholders represented took the challenge seriously of preserving the environment. All of us can do something, we can preserve the part of cosmology in our reach and if everyone is doing this then the environment is preserved.

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Ujamaa Centre, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
 Postal address: Private Bag Xo1, Scottsville 3209, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa
 Telephone: +27 (0)33 260 6294 Email: west@ukzn.ac.za Website: ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za



Photo taken inside the tent at Foreman Road Durban (Article on the last page)

Sex Work

After the great training session that some of the Ujamaa staff got from the SWEAT organization in Cape Town, much planning and deliberations went on as we prepared to host the first Contextual Bible Study around Sex Work. We initially held a dialogue with key stakeholders; sex workers, police men and pastors. This was a very fruitful meeting as we used this platform to learn what sex work is and the vulnerabilities involved for the sex workers themselves and how the law and religious people interact with them. The pastors and policies were not invited as gate keepers but as students here to learn about the world of sex workers.

The 10th of October 2017 saw the first CBS being held and we used Luke 7: 36-50. When we drew on this text we had hoped that the sex workers would explain and understand the text differently, but it was them that concluded that sex work was a sin and complained about struggling with pre- and post-guilt. The hearts cry for many was economic liberation and meanwhile, as they continue they preferred privacy around their job.

Earth, not Heaven is the focus

By Gerald West In our previous Newsletter we provided a link to the "Poverty Trends in South Africa" report by Statistics South Africa (2017). The report provides us with statistical 'proof' of the realities the Ujamaa Centre works with every week as we engage with local communities in what we call our 'Bread Theology' programme.

This is how the report summarises poverty in South Africa in 2015, the end date of the report: "Despite the general decline in poverty between 2006 and 2011, poverty levels in South Africa rose in 2015. When applying the upper-bound poverty line (R992 per person per month in 2015 prices), we see that more than one out of every two South Africans were poor in 2015, with the poverty headcount increasing to 55,5% from a series low of 53,2% in 2011. This translates into over 30,4 million South Africans living in poverty in 2015."

Poverty has a race and a gender, with black Africans "carrying the overwhelming share of poverty by representing more than nine out of every ten individuals", and with females representing 57,2% of the poor in 2015. Furthermore, the report confirms, women "constitute the majority of casual or contract workers". With unemployment rates (not including casual or contract workers) having "stabilised at around 25,0%", the prospects for social dignity and economic change are severely constrained. Many of the so-called 'employed' do not have decent work or earn decent wages.

The report is full of such detail, providing us with the social analysis we need to 'See'. See-Judge-Act is the fundamental praxis cycle of the Ujamaa Centre. See = analysing reality; Judge = evaluate this reality from the perspective of the prophetic tradition

of the Bible and theology; Act = change reality so that it conforms to the kin-dom of God. This report is one of many resources to 'See' African realities.

What is less evident are resources to 'Judge' this reality. Put simply, what are the biblical and theological re-

"Poverty has a Race and a Gender"

sources for faith communities to become involved in socio-economic analysis and change? Without such resources the millions of Christian South Africans who are poor and unemployed have to rely on what they hear from their church leaders. There are two dominant theological responses to poverty and unemployment from within Christian theological traditions. The first maintains that this world is not as important as the world to come in heaven. The second blames the poor and unemployed for being poor and unemployed, insisting that they 'claim' their individual right to the blessing of God in this world. The first theological tradition is that of evangelical Christianity; the second theological tradition is that of prosperity theology. The Ujamaa Centre rejects both theologies. We work with a systemic analysis of poverty and unemployment. It is unjust economic systems, both local and international, that generate poverty and unemployment. We 'See' reality differently. We also 'Judge' this reality differently, using a systemic analysis of the Bible as a resource for a systemic analysis of contemporary reality.

For example, many Christians recite the 'Lord's Prayer' as if it is about spiritual matters, we interpret this prayer differently. In Matthews version of the 'Lord's Prayer' (Matthew 6:9-13) it is clear that the prayer is about economics!

9 Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 'Your kingdom come. Your
will be done, On earth as it is in
heaven:

11 'Give us this day our daily
bread.

12 'And forgive us our debts, as
we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 'And do not lead us into tempta-
tion, but deliver us from evil'.

I have placed a colon at the end
of verse 10. Verse 9 makes the
focus of the prayer clear; it is
about God's kin-dom coming 'on
earth'! Earth, not heaven is the
focus. The prayer then goes on to
explain what needs to
change for God's kin-
dom to come on earth.

First, communities (for
the focus is on plurality
and not individuality) would re-
quire bread for each day. This is
an immediate need. But, second,
and more importantly, there
would need to be systemic
change. Communities would re-
quire release from indebtedness.
The rich are rich because the
poor are poor. Wealth and pov-
erty are systemic, and debt is one
of the central mechanisms in
constructing poverty. In the socio-
economic world of Jesus poverty
was caused by debt. Being in debt
often resulted in the loss of fam-
ily and community land. So, ac-
cording to the theological logic of
the 'Lord's Prayer', release from
debt would lead to communities
regaining their land and so hav-
ing the means to provide their
own bread. The 'Lord's Prayer' is
dealing with both poverty and
unemployment!

Here is a theological resource
with which to 'Judge' South Afri-
can realities of poverty and un-
employment. And what is the
'temptation'? The 'temptation' is

to be captive to evil systems! Un-
fortunately, the "Poverty Trends
in South Africa" report by Statis-
tics South Africa falls short of a
fully systemic analysis of poverty
and unemployment in South Afri-
ca. 'State capture' is not referred
to at all, and neither is South Afri-
ca's macro-economic complicity
with neo-liberal globalised cap-
italism. But there are prophetic
resources with which to 'Judge'
such local and international sys-
tems. In Mark 11:27-13:2 Jesus
deals explicitly with 'temple cap-
ture', as the elites of his day use
the resources of the temple for
their own enrichment rather
than the service of the people.

***The 'Lord's Prayer' is dealing with both
poverty and unemployment!***

I have discussed the 'Lord's
Prayer' in more detail in a recent
publication of the Lutheran
World Federation. See: West,
Gerald O. "The Lord's Prayer as
Economic Renewal." In *Global
Perspectives on the Reformation:
Interactions between Theology,
Politics and Economics*, edited by
Anne Burkhardt and Simone
Sinn, 85-94. Leipzig: Evange-
lische Verlagsanstalt, 2017. [https://
www.lutheranworld.org/content/
resource-global-perspectives-
reformation](https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-global-perspectives-reformation)

Fortunately, the LWF under-
stands the importance not only
of 'Seeing' but also of 'Judging'.
African Christians, in their many
millions, require access to theo-
logical resources for social
change. And their church leaders
require a theological analysis that
will enable them to engage sys-
temically with the governmental
realm.

The report can be found at: [http://
www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-
10-06/Report-03-10-062015.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-10-06/Report-03-10-062015.pdf)

16 day's of activism against GBV

Photos of the Tamar Campaign work-
shops in the communities.



Public Theology: looking at Pope John Paul II

By Rogers Ndawula “Prophetic Theology versus Church Theology: Citizenship, Church and Politics/ Democracy, a reflection on the life and legacy of Pope John Paul II,” was the theme dealt with for the workshop/CBS that took place on 20th November 2017 at Mpophomeni Township.

This Township is situated in the midlands-uMngeni Municipality and it has approximately a population of over 30,000 people of which less than 10,000 people are unemployed. Judging from the conversation I had some time back with one of the community practitioners who lives in this particular area, there is no doubt that this community is experiencing a lot of challenges from a social and economic point of view and the Church and the Clergy in this area seem to be doing not enough, if not nothing. Therefore we were challenged to facilitate a workshop and concientize especially the clergy in this area so that they can start to act in order to bring about change in this community. Drawing from Pope John Paul II’s life and legacy, a clergy man who said and stood by his words that the Church cannot stand idly when the people are suffer-



freedom and took it directly to the people, insisting to restore human dignity, emphasizing on the aspect of unity and love. He also declared the human rights in relation to politics as it should be the Church’s business and tried to implement all of this and results took place.

The workshop was a CBS (Contextual Bible Study), using the “SEE, JUDGE, ACT” methodology. In the first part, a DVD about the life and legacy of Pope John Paul II was played, with the purpose to make the participants reflect on their situation in the context and their position as pastors within the community. This served as the “See”.

Secondly the text from Rom 13: 6-7, was read and we reflected on the notion of “participation”. They saw that from their own context, the text is calling upon them all as members of the community to participate in activities that are meant to bring about transformation in their community. This served as the “Judge” part.

For the “Act” part, looking again at Pope John Paul II as an example, they saw that the Church and Politics are compatible, and that they themselves can’t stand idly anymore simply because they’re church people, they saw that they have to participate in politics, be active in dealing with social concerns and therefore they decided to use the “work Sunday” as a tool to deal with their challenges, for instance: unemployment which is very rampant in the area and this would be prophetic on their part. The workshop was attended mainly by the clergy as was the intended target group, they appreciated the process and attested that it opened their minds and thus they pledged to do something. This commitment would actually render them to be responsible citizens.



An Ujamaa Praxis Process with Communities:

By **Sithembiso Zwane** The Ujamaa Centre's praxis process is manifested in the community engagement component of our work. On the 25th November we had a strategic reflection meeting designed to discuss and analyze the challenges in our context and begin to conceptualize what the future of our collaboration should be. The community partners came from Natal-Midlands areas representing our Body and Bread theologies which are our biggest programs.

The reflective process began with an in-depth introduction and analysis of the historic work of the Ujamaa Centre dating back to the 1980's leading to the formation of ISB (the Institute for the Study of the Bible) in 1989. This process was important in terms of alignment with our current Theory of Change (ToC) indicating that religio-cultural change can lead to change and social transformation. The religio-cultural change brought political emancipation in South Africa when churches and traditional leaders joined hands against an illegitimate racist minority government to bring about the socio-political change and an end to political violence.

The historical challenges of political violence and intolerance have become contemporary once more with the political killings in KwaZulu-Natal since the local government election. These killings continue unabated and the question that arose in the 80's came back: where is God in the midst of all the political challenges? The Ujamaa Centre provided the ideo-theological intellectual analysis of the context using the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) method of praxis. The contemporary political killings in KwaZulu-Natal are complicated with a number of scenarios connected with the killings, including factionalism, political positions, economic power and benefits.

The Ujamaa Centre with its community partners are concerned with these politically motivated killings in the Province and hope to begin a dialogue about the sources of violence using the Contextual Bible Study (CBS). The CBS is an instrument of reflection, action and liberation that was used in the 1980's when the then ISB was formed. The CBS contributed immensely to change and social transformation.

A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, World Council of Churches

In the end of October, a reference group on Human Sexuality of the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in Pietermaritzburg to talk about Homosexuality and the Bible. They had asked Gerald West to facilitate their Bible Studies every morning and the Ujamaa Centre to organize a 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace' on the Saturday. The WCC has such pilgrimages all over the world as a 'way of listening, learning, and sharing approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and in peace making, and to pray together for peace in the community and in the world.' (Taken out of the correspondence around the pilgrimage)

Ujamaa Centre, with the help of the Gay and Lesbian Network, organized the pilgrimage, a walk and journey through the town of Pietermaritzburg stopping at different places; meeting people along the way, standing still, reflecting, asking questions around notions of sexuality and short prayers were part of the pilgrimage.



Group picture of the reference group taken after one of their Bible Studies



Photos taken at the workshop



Body theology: Eudy Simelane Public Lecture

By Mote Magomba The Ujamaa Centre, in partnership with The Other Foundation and the Pietermaritzburg Gay & Lesbian Network, hosted the second Eudy Simelane Annual Public Lecture on the 5th October 2017, at C1 Auditorium, University of KwaZulu-Natal, in Pietermaritzburg, as well as a three-day Workshop on “Prophetic African Christian Pastoral Care in the Context of LGBTI Sexualities” from 4th to 6th October 2017 at Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. These two events brought together eighty (80) Church leaders, theological students, and LGBTI activists from across South Africa and beyond, to critically engage on pastoral care issues for the LGBTI community.

The Eudy Simelane workshop and annual lecture created an enabling environment for a critical engagement on pastoral care for the LGBTI community, in order to develop pastoral care resources for LGBTI sexualities. Hence, the following seven themes emerged during the workshop proceedings: (1) LGBTIQA+ in Church, focussing on how to create safe spaces for everyone in the church. (2) Accompaniment, which focussed on the need for journeying with people, encouraging and supporting them with empathy and love. (3) Disruption, which focussed on how to challenge the norms, create controversy, seek attention for awareness, take risk and break the silence by coming out of the box. (4) Networking with academia, government, churches for dialogues, tradi-

tional leaders for dialogues, LGBTIQA+ groups, other civil society groups, parents/families, and LGBTIQA+ friendly businesses and corporates. (5) Facilitation theme highlighted the importance of openness to all, and showing agape love to all even in discussing erotic topics. (6) Leadership theme highlighted the following aspects: prophetic, inclusive, non-judgemental leadership. (7) Research theme highlighted the need for continued qualitative research to provide materials for pastoral counselling, as well as broad scale distribution of alternate narrative backed by theological and biblical studies research to be integrated in the pastoral care resources.

The 2017 Eudy Simelane workshop and annual public lecture will be followed up with a series of community-based dialogues on the bible and homosexuality, providing a series of workshops over a period of a year. The resources from the workshops and the annual lecture will ultimately be used to produce a Pastoral Care Manual by December 2018, which will equip local church leaders to provide theological leadership aimed at reducing homophobia, ‘corrective’ rapes, and other hate crimes targeting LGBTI community.

The notes of the workshops and lecture are on our website:

http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/WhatUJAMAAdoes/LECTURES/lecture_BODY.aspx

Body Theology: “16 days of activism against GBV” workshop

By **Belinda Crawford** In the midst of the national campaign of ‘16 day’s of activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV), the Ujamaa Centre organized a workshop for stakeholders of several organizations to talk about the current affairs. The workshop was attended by religious leaders and social key role players who live in and around the city of Pietermaritzburg. The participants acknowledged how South Africa has an increase in Gender Based Violence and declining moral standards towards humanity.

Each sector indicated their challenges. For example, the New Image Youth Organization feel excluded, neglected and silenced in their communities, and not being able to speak out when they are raped, molested or abused. Men’s Forum indicated the challenges of generational gaps from tradition and culture to a society of technology. The Gay & Lesbian Network indicated how violence, murders, corrective rape, and homophobia are on the rise in Pietermaritzburg. They also explained why they are more likely to use self-destructive substances such as alcohol, and why they prefer certain hang out spots as they are safer spaces than the church. They feel the church is more compassionate and forgiving towards rapists, perpetrators and abusers whilst the LGTBQA+ community is banded and excluded from church. Religious leaders reported how difficult it is for them to intervene in family feuds and abusive cases as their intervention sometimes causes division in homes and families.

The CBS on Tamar’s story in 2 Samuel 13 demonstrated the reality that rape and abuse is not always done by outsiders but often occurs within the family. The discussions opened the eyes of some of the youth and afforded them the space to share their stories where such situations have occurred. In relation to the text the groups discovered how patriarchy and power can be oppressive and exclusive.

As part of ACT every organization present presented what they do to prevent Gender Based Violence. This also created a platform for the various organizations to network and work together.



“16 days of activism against GBV”

Every year, from November 25th to December 10th, the 16 day’s of activism against Gender Based Violence take place. The Ujamaa Centre uses the Tamar Campaign to open up a space to talk about Violence, Abuse, and Rape in the communities. In this newsletter you will see many photos taken at the different workshops. Ten of our HIV support groups (mostly attended by women) organized the Tamar Contextual Bible Study. The support group leaders, whom we have trained in our ‘Training of the Trainers’ workshops, facilitated the Bible Study.



UJAMAA CENTRE

The Ujamaa Centre was initiated in 1989 as part of the School of Theology at the then University of Natal (currently known as UKZN).

The Ujamaa Centre is the ideological-theological product of various strands of liberation theology, particularly South African Black Theology and South African Contextual Theology. More specifically, the Ujamaa Centre is committed to working with communities of the poor, the working-class, and the marginalized, using the biblical and theological resources for social and individual transformation.

At the heart of the Ujamaa Centre is the concept and practice of praxis. Praxis involves an ongoing commitment to the cycle-spiral of action-and-reflection. This is central to our work. It is praxis that has enabled the Ujamaa Centre to respond to the ongoing and changing realities of South African and Southern African context. We try to respond faithfully to our context, using biblical and theological resources, and then we carefully (and formally) reflect on what we have done and how we have done it. It is praxis that keep us connected both to the community and the academy.

We have seen, and are with the Abahlali Basemjondolo

Abahlali Basemjondolo (Shack Dwellers Movement) have been victims of socio-economic atrocities and marginalization by the EThekweni Municipality. Their dignity as citizens has been consistently violated by those in political power. As Ujamaa Centre we appreciate their resilience and agency which is embedded in People's Theology.

For years the Ujamaa Centre has partnered with the Abahlali Basemjondolo Movement in Durban. Their Human Rights are violated and the people are pushed to the margins of society. Recent fires at the Foreman Road informal settlement left hundreds of families without a roof above their heads. Only one tent was put up for over 500 people to sleep in, in horrible conditions. We went there to see and to help with the little we can do, bringing some clothes (organized by UKZN students).

We met with an elderly woman in the tent, who shared her story of being too old to get the 'zinc', distributed to rebuild the shacks, as she doesn't have the strength to stand in line, claim and carry the building materials, leaving her as one of the few women in the tent. She is repeatedly raped by the men, to which she added: "they don't even give me something for it." The fire has made the vulnerable even more vulnerable.

Part of the delay in receiving help is because Abahlali Basemjondolo has challenged existing political structures, and so these are some of the repercussions, especially after the last elections. Food is promised but when we were there, nothing had come through. We asked what was happening and heard about religious groups only willing to feed people from that religion.

The Red Cross was present, handing out clothes and shoes. They were well organized so we gave them the bags of clothes the students had collected, so that they could be distributed to all the women and men waiting in lines.

Abahlali Basemjondolo asked us to tell the world what we have seen. The media sometimes accuses them of seeking attention, spreading lies. We were there to see and to take a stand with the Abahlali Basemjondolo.



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Private Bag X01
Scottsville 3209
Pietermaritzburg
South Africa

Phone: +27 (0)33 260 6294
E-mail: west@ukzn.ac.za
Website: ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za