

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

**Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological
Community Development and Research**



“30 years of prophetic work and witness”

Outline

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Executive Summary

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change” (Wayne Dyer).

The unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the way we look at things and our routine approach had to change resulting in the change in the things we looked at. The way of doing community-based work has changed in the past 2 years. Consequently, community work has change slightly. The pandemic has accelerated the introduction of the fourth industrial revolution. Our work in the community had to take a hybrid approach of in person and virtual facilitation. This meant involving a wide range of network at global scale but also meant the exclusion of a very important section of our working-class community who could not participate due to challenges with affordability and access to a reliable internet.

The work in the Body Theology programme has continued to contribute to deconstructing and disrupting the dominant ideologies in the public sphere. The emphasis in the past year has been the development of online and biblical resources to engage communities on issues of organizational development with strategic work done with the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian Aid and other organizations on systemic and structural oppression of vulnerable groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community, survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), HIV support groups and many more.

The work in the Bread Theology programme has focused on the challenges poised by Covid-19 with the majority of young people unemployed. A lot younger people have lost jobs when companies affected by the pandemic closed. The unemployment rate has escalated enormously in the past 2 years. The casual employment that had been created has dissipated under the pandemic causing serious food insecurity in the community. The advocacy and lobbying work done by civil society has contributed to the extension of Social Relief of Distress grant (SRD) and more that 18 million South Africans remain on social grants because of high levels of poverty and inequality.

The work in the Earth Theology programme has established a strategic network of environmental organizations. The collaboration with the WCC and the Southern African Faith Environmental Institute (SAFCEI) has contributed immensely in the successful presentation of the Gunther Wittenberg lecture on religion and environment.

The work on Public Theology programme has led to a productive engagement and collaboration with the Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria respectively on the discussion about the Basic Income Grant (BIG). The wider social and ecumenical networks have pushed government to consider this in the future.

The work on People’s Theology programme brings all the other programmes into dialogue with the grassroot communities. The new addition to this is the student movement based in the University. This movement is grappling with issues associated with working-class communities.

Revd Sithembiso Zwane

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SS Zwane', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Director: Ujamaa Centre for Community Development

Date: 03 March 2022

Body Theology Programme

Introduction

In this report the programme provides a synopsis of the activities done in the first part of the year. A full report will be provided at the end of the year reflecting the outcomes of the work done throughout the year.

Activities

The Body Theology is a flagship programme of the Ujamaa Centre because it integrates a wide range of contemporary and contextual challenges. The central thematic message is the disruption and deconstruction of systemic and structural injustices.

The first activity took place on 16th and 30th June 2021 and was a collaboration with Christian Aid on the development of new Contextual Bible Studies (CBS) on sexuality and sexual violence and gender justice. The primary focus was to train the trainers of the churches affiliated to Christian Aid around the world. As part of the partnership we developed a few CBS on the themes identified by the churches and their community partners. The webinars were attended by +- 25 participants each with +- 15 women and 10 men.

The second activity took place on 5th -15th July 2021 was a series of Contextual Bible Study (CBS) session on health and healing commissioned by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and facilitated by Prof Gerald West. These webinars focused primarily on building biblical and theological capacity on issues of health and healing. The webinars engaged with how health affects communities especially women during the time of Covid-19. The webinars were attended by +-100 people per session the majority being women around the globe. There were +- 60 women and +-40 men participating in the different sessions.

The third activity took place on the 26th July to 9th August and was a partnership with the University of Denver in the United States focusing on theology and development with a focus on gender identity and women in development. The module was offered by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Theology and Development Programme in partnership with Gender, Religion and Health (GRH). The course was attended by 6 students and 5 participants representing NGOs in KwaZulu-Natal who are mostly working in the area of gender and sexuality.

The fourth activity took place on the 10-12 September 2021 focusing on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and HIV in communities in the Natal Midlands in the greater Pietermaritzburg facilitated by Ms Bonging Zengele and Ms Noluthando Gasa. The focus of the activities was to provide much needed support to the survivors of GBV through CBS training. The activities were attended by GBV organized groups and HIV support groups in the area. There were +- 40 women and +- 20 men who participated in the activities organized by Ujamaa Centre.

The fifth activity took place on the 8 December 2021 presented as the Eudy Simelane lecture challenging toxic masculinities, homophobia and hate crime in the church and communities. The lecture was presented by Prof Zethu Matabela,¹ the first chair of human sexuality and

¹ See the link [Eudy Simelane Memorial Lecture 2021: Prof. zethu Matebeni - YouTube](#)

queer studies at the University of the Free State. In her lecture, she challenged the dominant narrative of heteronormativity and masculinities as the major contributors to problems of exclusion and marginalization faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. The lecture was presented in two parts (as documentary and as in person discussion) in KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape provinces respectively. It was attended by +- 150 people in both events with +- 80 women and +-70 men.

Results

A proposed future collaboration is planned with Christian Aid, WCC and the University of Denver on Contextual Bible Study (CBS) training for the clergy and the students. The possible research collaboration with colleagues at the University of Denver is a result of a productive collaboration.

The GBV and HIV community organizations have been strengthened to deal with the challenges of Covid-19 that have exacerbated the challenge of GBV and HIV among the poorest communities.

A discussion on lobbying and advocacy work around sentencing of perpetrators of sexual crimes as GBV cases escalate in South Africa. The legal framework has to change to ensure that those responsible for sexual crimes are given harsher sentences to send a strong message on GBVf.

Analysis

The fundamental contribution of the programme in the first part of the year has been the collaboration with the intention to build biblical and theological capacity on issues of health, sexuality, gender justice and HIV and AIDS among the local and global communities. It is evident that the work of the Ujamaa Centre especially on conceptual and methodological development is required at local and international levels. The growing list of organizations requesting assistance with this has grown exponentially.

This has led to a reflection on CBS pedagogy, our view is that CBS is experienced and not taught. Most of the organizations are calling for a ‘training’ course on the CBS that will be ‘taught’. This is an ongoing reflection on the methodology and practice, which is part of our praxis as an organization.

There is also an assumption that the facilitation of processes of social transformation exists in the ecumenical movements. However, this has been challenged by the organizations who have invited Ujamaa to provide training that this aspect is missing in their church settings. This therefore has prompted Ujamaa to augment its scope for training of facilitators to ensure the development and nurturing of leadership capacity among the churches.

Conclusion

The annual report will reflect work across all the projects in the programme which includes disability. The programme has gradually contributed to research and social transformation using biblical and theological methodologies.

Bread Theology Programme

Introduction

The programme reports focuses primarily on the work done in the first part of the year (February to September 2021) as well as the planned activities for the second part of the year (October to December 2021)

Activities

The Bread Theology is primarily concerned with the challenges of economic injustices in the public realm. The concept of 'Bread' is a symbolic biblical reference used to highlight the challenges of the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The first activity of the programme was the paired job readiness workshops which took place on the 7 and 14 May respectively. The two workshops were attended by 25 unemployed youth from the Natal Midlands. The primary objective of the workshops was to expose unemployed youth to the challenges that contributes to the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality especially at the time of Covid-19. Among the participants in the first workshop were 15 women and 10 men (25) for the first workshop and 20 women and 10 men (30) for the second workshop.

The second activity was the Mzwandile R Nunes Public Lecture which took place on the 26 May 2021. The lecture was attended by 25 participants, +- 15 women and +- 10 men using the virtual platform. The 13th Mzwandile R Nunes lecture was presented by the chair of the Ujamaa Centre Board, the Revd Sbusiso Gwala. Rev Gwala is a former Ujamaa staff member who is employed by the Department of Social Development in the Eastern Cape. The theme of the lecture was "The economic impact of Covid-19 in South Africa: the experiences of the unemployed". The lecture captured the critical issues faced by the unemployed in South Africa through the economic analysis of the impact of Covid-19 among the poorest of the poor. Subsequent to this lecture was the economic and political unrest in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng respectively. The economic and political unrest laid bare the rapidly growing inequalities in society. These inequalities have polarized society along rich and poor, men and women and white and black. These binaries are a concern to a better life.

The third activity was a collaboration between the Ujamaa Centre and Christian Aid focusing on debt and inequality. The primary focus of this collaboration was to develop new Contextual Bible Studies (CBS) on economic justice for the churches working with Just Scripture in the United Kingdom (UK). The series of events were attended by 15 participants, 8 women and 7 men.

The fourth activity was done in East Africa focusing on economic justice and migration. This activity took place on the 15-17 September with 30 participants attending, 18 women and 12 men. The workshop produced new Contextual Bible Study (CBS) on economic justice and migration for the East Africa region.

The fifth activity was also done in East Africa with a focus on gender and migration. This activity also generated new CBS material aimed at contributing to the CBS manual on gender

and migration. There were 30 participants, 20 women and 10 men from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Results

Since the lockdown in March 2020, more challenges of income inequality and unemployment have emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa and other neighbouring countries exacerbating the problem of poverty. As a result the social relief grant has been reinstated to assist the unemployed who lost their jobs during the lockdown and recent unrest and looting in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng respectively.

The call for the extension of the relief of stress grant made by civil society has been granted by government with the extension of the grant to March 2022. However, the desired result is the implementation of the Basic Income Grant (BIG) on a permanent basis.

Analysis

The recent quarter 2 report by Statistics South Africa indicated that South Africa's unemployment rate has reached unprecedented proportion with 585 000 people losing their work in the period from April-June contributing to a 7.8 million people without work. The youth unemployment is estimated at 40% which is the highest in the post 1994 period. The youth unemployment is a major concern for the government and has been exacerbated by Covid-19.

The programme activities in the first part of the year focused on the analysis of the economic impact of Covid-19 with reference to unemployment. The already volatile economic context prior to Covid-19 was exacerbated by the pandemic with most casual type of work in the informal economy obliterated by the pandemic. The precarious non-standard type of work provides food for the majority of the working class in South Africa. The loss of such work meant that the majority of the poor households became susceptible to poverty and malnutrition. The availability of food does not mean affordability, food availability has not been a problem, but food affordability is. The research done by economic justice and dignity group in Pietermaritzburg indicates that food prices have increased exponentially in the past 12 months due to a number of factors including the demand for food, petrol increases, lockdown, the unrest and violence in KZN and Gauteng.

The loss of jobs has put a further strain on a gradually shrinking tax base. The middle class in the public service has to finance the fiscus to ensure that there is continuity in the provision of services. However, the public service is severely compromised by corruption, lack of incentives due to a moratorium on salary increases.

Conclusion

The programme is doing work within South Africa and East Africa region respectively. There has been growing interest from different groups to provide the job readiness workshops across the continent to highlight the problem of unemployment.

Earth Theology Programme

Introduction

The programme provides a detailed report of the activities conducted in the first part of the year. The programme has not been able to do most of its activities in the past due to unavailability of key stakeholders. This year is different, the appointment of a dedicated coordinator for the programme has yielded positive results with most of the important activities done already.

Activities

The Earth Theology is engaging primarily with the challenges of Climate Change and Global warming. These issues have affected the working-class communities the most especially in poor and marginalized rural areas.

The first activity took place on 23 February 2021 which was an open Letter to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation by Faith Leaders in Africa hosted by SAFCIE (South African Faith Community Environmental Institute). The letter's purpose is to urge the Foundation to abandon industrial agriculture in Africa in favor of sustainable and agro ecological agriculture. The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the Muslim Supreme Council of South Africa, and the Religions for Peace Climate Youth Initiative are among the stakeholders. The webinar highlighted common concerns about the Alliance for the Green Revolution in Africa's (AGRA) role in the region, which is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates). While Gates and AGRA claim to be committed to ensuring Africa's food security, the contended agency argued that supporting large-scale industrial monocrop farming, which relies on expensive and frequently harmful hybrid or genetically modified seed and chemical inputs, will not ensure food security for the vast majority of Africa's citizens. The webinar was attended by 150 people, +-90 women and +-60 men joined the webinar.

The second activity took place on the 11 March 2021 and was hosted by SAFCIE (South African Faith Community Environmental Institute) titled "the Global day of action for climate justice". SAFCIE, in collaboration with people of faith in our region and numerous other faith actors, had envisioned a transformed world in which humanity acts with a shared reverence for all life on Earth, in which the era of conquest, extraction, and exploitation gives way to an era of cooperation and community. Globally, an increasing number of people are directly affected by climate-related disasters. Millions are displaced and impoverished as a result of droughts, floods, fires, and hurricanes. COVID is cruelly exacerbating these consequences for the most vulnerable members of our society. That is why people of faith are uniting to demand real solutions and to set a positive example. No more fossil fuel infrastructure, tropical deforestation, or financing associated with these activities. 100% renewable energy - especially for the 800 million people worldwide who lack access to electricity. Green jobs are needed to rebuild the world's infrastructure and aid in the recovery process following COVID. Wealthy countries are setting the standard with commitments that

reflect their share of the blame for the crisis we are facing. The webinar was attended by +-80 people, an estimated +-50 woman and +-40 men participated.

The third activity took place on 4-6 May 2021 organized by the Faith Leader Environmental Advocacy Training by SAFCEI. The training was attended by 45 participants, 30 women and 15 men and provided a platform for common eco-justice action across Zambia and beyond. Additionally, the workshop included a process of collectively learning, sharing, and developing an advocacy plan, with input from various advocacy and subject specialists. Eco-justice issues such as climate, energy, food, and local resilience will be discussed. Practical ethical eco-action will be incorporated into the plans that are developed. The fourth activity took place on the 12 May 2021 and it was the annual Gunther H Wittenberg Memorial Public lecture. The topic for the lecture was “Covid-19, Climate Justice and the Environment. The speakers for the lecture were Rev Dr Canon Rachel Mash, the Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's Environmental Network, known as Green Anglicans and Rev Henrik Grape, the Senior Advisor on Care for Creation, Sustainability, and Climate Justice at the World Council of Churches (WCC). The fifth activity took place on the 23rd and 30th June 2021 respectively focusing on climate and youth and climate justice as part of the collaboration with Christian Aid from the United Kingdom (UK).

Results

A number of new networks on Earth Theology have been established as reflected in the report. The new coordinator has established strategic networks with key stakeholders in the climate justice landscape. In addition, the collaboration with Christian Aid has produced new biblical resources on Earth Theology that will contribute significantly to climate justice.

Analysis

The Earth Theology programme is strategically placed to create productive dialogues on climate justice. The programme provides expert biblical and theological analysis on issues of earth and climate justice in partnership with other key stakeholders in the field of climate justice. There is a clear link between the economy and ecology. The economy is *oikos-nomos* while ecology is *oikos-logos*². Both the economy and ecology come from the same Greek word, *oikos*. The economy is primarily concerned with alleviating poverty while ecology is concerned with protecting the environment from pollution. The programme aims to ensure that there is dialogue between the economy and ecology through the lens of biblical and theological methodology.

Conclusion

The programme has made steady process since the appointment of the coordinator. It will continue to engage in critical dialogue with key stakeholders in the climate justice landscape.

² De Gruchy S. Address to the South African Council of Churches (SACC), Triennial national Conference. 2008.

People's Theology Programme

Introduction

The report provides a synopsis of the work done in the programme in the first part of the year.

Activities

The People's Theology programme provides a conducive environment for social and ecumenical movements to engage in constructive dialogue to foster solidarity against the oppressive structures.

The first activity took place on 20 April 2021 focusing on student movements within the institutions of higher learning. These were students who participated in the #feesmustfall movement in the past years. The workshop was attended by 35 students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology. The majority of the participants were women leaders of political parties in the two Universities. It is estimated that +-20 women and +-15 men attended the event.

The second activity took place on 26 July to 9 August 2021 as part of the collaboration with the University of Denver. The programme invited senior leaders of social movements to give lectures in the course. The programme invited the founding president of Abahlali Basemjondolo comrade Sbu Zikode and the founding member and secretary general of the rural network Rev Mbhekiseni Mavuso. The course had 11 participants, 6 women and 5 men representing both students and NGOs. The third activity took place during 31 August to 10 September 2021 engaging the struggles of social movements. The primary focus of this activity was to assess the status of social movements affected by the recent unrest and looting in KwaZulu-Natal. Some of the shacks belonging to Abahlali Basemjondolo burned during the lockdown and thousands were left without shelter, clothes and food. The Ujamaa Centre used this activity to collect donations in the form of clothes and food to distribute to social movements around KwaZulu-Natal in partnership with Abahlali and Rural Network.

Results

The social movements in KwaZulu-Natal are collaborating on activities aimed at bringing about social justice and change in the community. They are mobilizing around job creation and BIG campaigns.

Analysis

The social movements are a strategic partner in the mobilization of communities for social and economic justice. They represent the majority of the working class in South Africa. The members of the social movements have suffered severely as a result of the pandemic losing their unprotected and precarious jobs in the city and having to remain in the shacks in search of new job opportunities.

Conclusion

The programme is committed to championing the struggle of social and religious movements in South Africa. It is showcasing the work of African scholars and leaders respectively.

Public Theology Programme

Introduction

Activities

The Public Theology draws on the resources of scholarship to build biblical and theological capacity of the church. The critical component in the programme is public prophetic theology that engages with the contemporary issues on religion and governance.

The first activity took place from the 25 August 2021 engaging with the implementation of Basic Income Grant (BIG) organized jointly by the University of Pretoria's Centre for Faith and Community, University of Stellenbosch's Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ujamaa Centre for biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. The webinar was attended by 20 participants from these academic institutions and their community partners and addressed by Prof Vivian Taylor of the Talyor Committee which was commissioned by government in 1999-2002 to conduct research into the affordability of the BIG in South Africa. The three institutions created the platform for deliberation on the BIG because of the increasing demands for the introduction of the BIG especially under Covid-19. It is proposed that the relief of stress Covid-19 grant be converted into a BIG for all the unemployed in South Africa. This is an ongoing discussion that involves the churches, academic institutions in the area of public theology and civil society at large.

The second activity took place on the 28 August 2021 focusing on the church and gender justice. The church's public prophetic message on Gender Based Violence (GBV) was interrogated by the women clergy participating in the webinar. The church is still reluctant to provide a platform for women leaders to articulate their concerns especially as it relates sexual violence and gender identity. The church has a prophetic responsibility to speak with the survivors of sexual violence in the prophetic theology of liberation. The church cannot be neutral in situations of injustice.

Results

A planned series of activities to mobilize communities on the BIG in South Africa using the examples of Namibia have contributed to the extension of the SRD grant of R350 for the unemployed people. There is also ongoing research on its affordability and sustainability of the BIG as a permanent solution to poverty. There is willingness to create more employment opportunities for the unemployed. Also, more young unemployed youth participated in job seeking projects and training.

Analysis

The call for BIG is not new. As indicated, Prof Taylor conducted an extensive research in 1999 as per government request. The pertinent question is, what has changed since 1999? A few things have changed. First, we have Covid-19 that has exacerbated the problem of unemployment with more than 40% of the population unemployed. In the space of 3-month (April-June 2021) statistics South Africa reported that 7.6 million people lost their jobs as results of retrenchment due to Covid-19. This is a concern for the majority of the unemployed

youth who are without work. Second, the current administration, unlike the previous government is willing to engage further on the possible implementation of BIG. The church and civil society in general is optimistic that with research done and political willingness there is hope for BIG.

Conclusion

The programme is undergoing changes with the appointment of the new coordinator. The commitment to public prophetic theology remains important. The programme is serving the church to build its theological capacity.

Appendix:

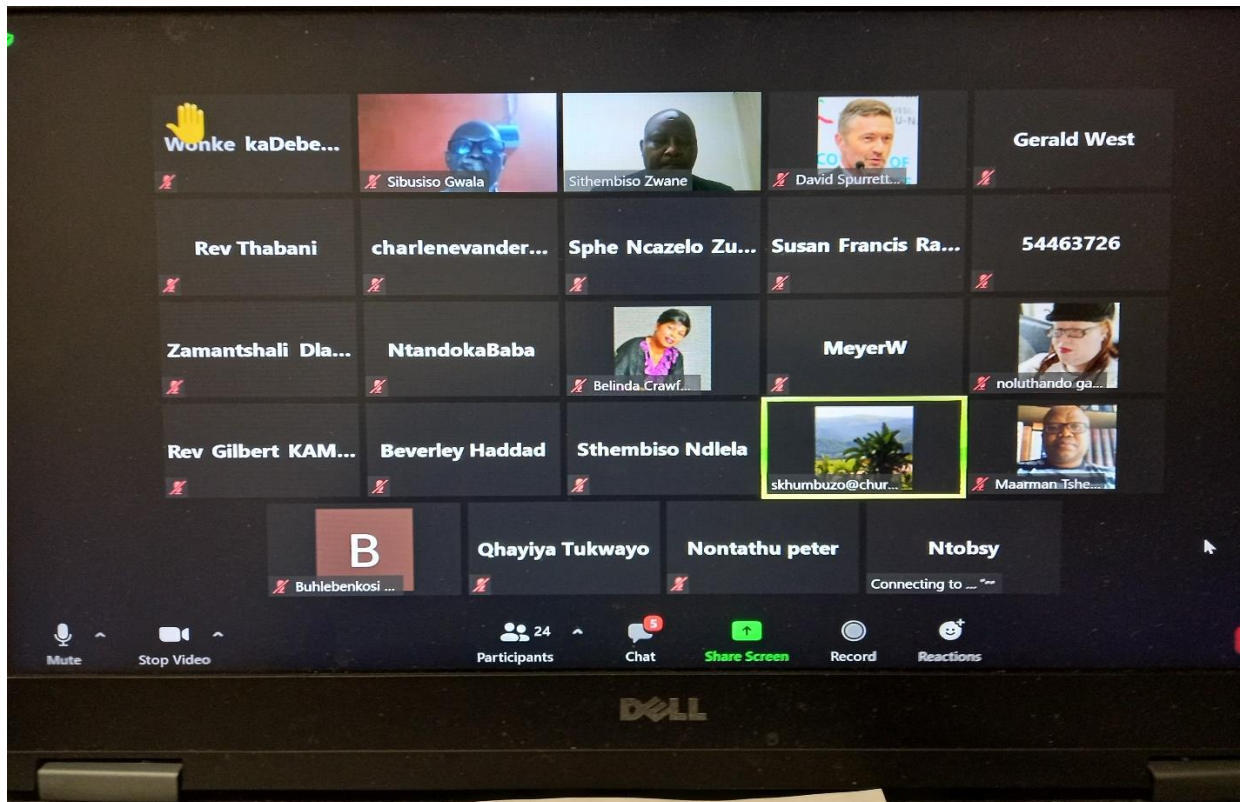
Ujamaa Centre work in pictures.

Body Theology Programme

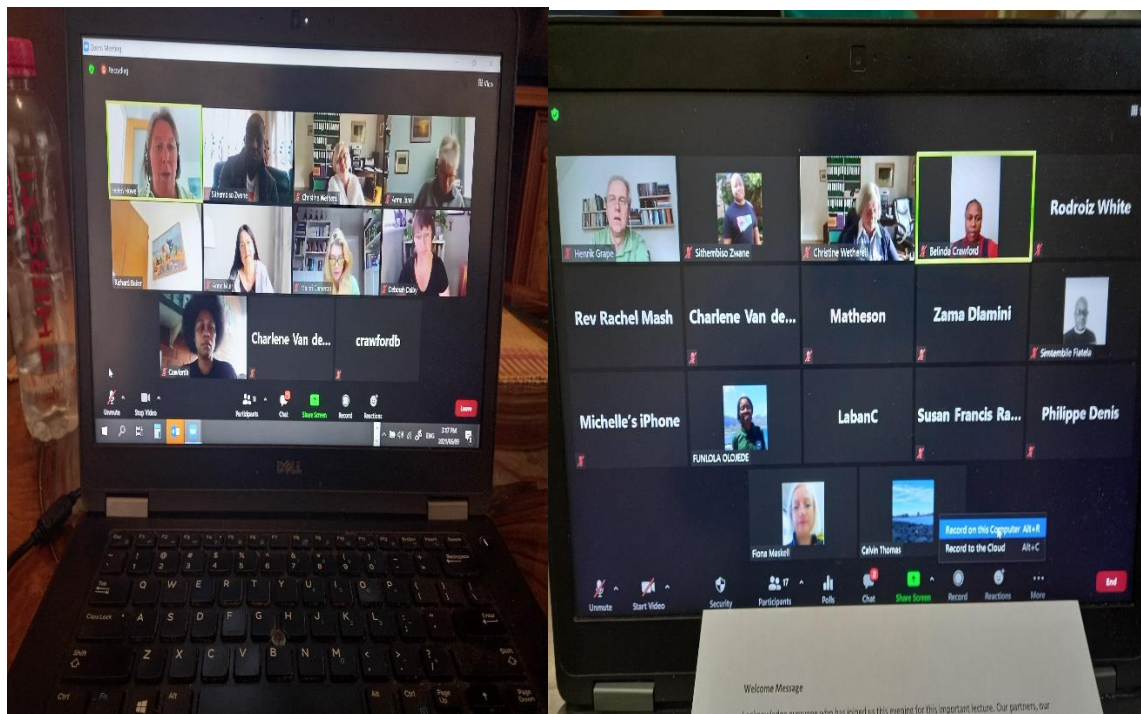


Bread Theology Programme

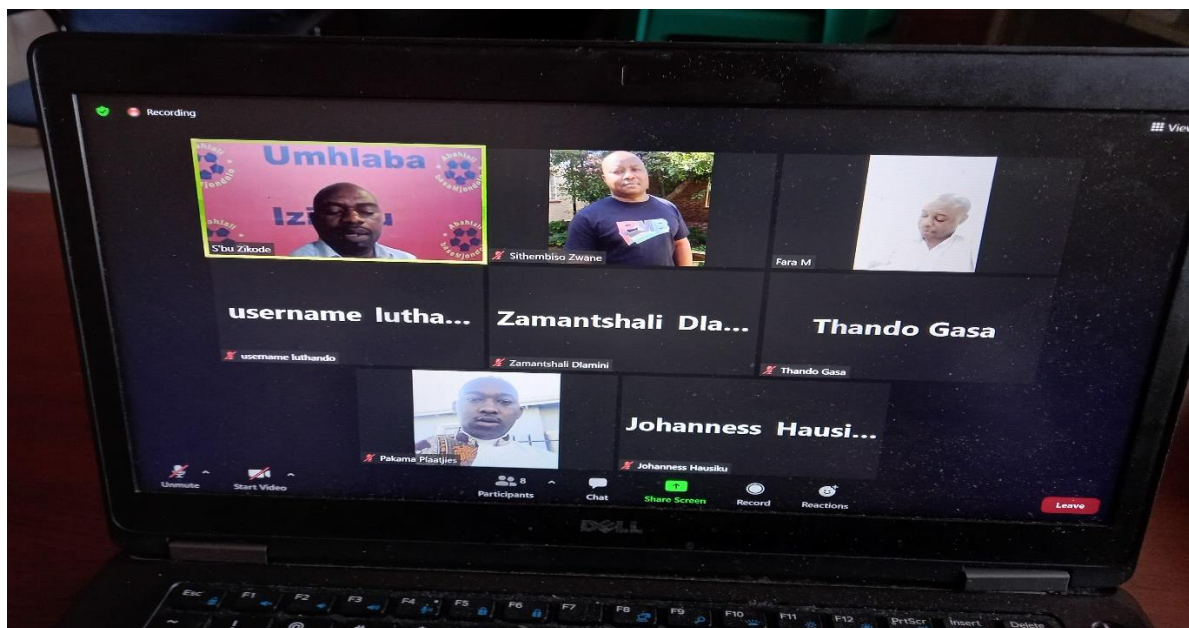




Earth Theology Programme



People's Theology Programme



Public Theology Programme

