



REACHING OUT

Reach Out Newsletter 2023-4



Dear Trinity Family

It's hard to believe that we have come to the end of the year already! We are so grateful for the ways in which we have been able to "reach out" to those in our community and beyond this year. That has only been possible through your tithing, generous donations and giving of your time and gifts to support the various Reach Out activities and initiatives. Thank you so much! We are excited for what 2024 will hold and look forward to continuing to provide the invaluable support for and care of the organisations that we support.

We wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas and many blessings as we head into 2024!

Happy reading! 😊

*May God give you...
For every storm, a rainbow,
For every tear, a smile,
For every care, a promise,
And a blessing in each trial.
For every problem life sends,
A faithful friend to share,
For every sigh, a sweet song,
And an answer for each prayer.
(Irish Blessing)*

ORANGE FARM CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Trinity congregation for their generous support of the 2023 Orange Farm Children's Christmas Party. A wonderful team of Trinity volunteers, ranging in age from 18 to 88, gave of their time and effort to ensure the success of the event, and we express our sincere appreciation to each and every one of them. The young boys delighted everyone with their gumboot dancing and the young girls sang and danced, expressing their gratitude for making their Christmas celebrations extra special. The children enjoyed various games and also had the opportunity to create their own Christmas decorations to take home. The gifts and snacks, for about 200 children from ages 1 to 16, completed the day and we once again thank our Precious Father, Jesus Christ for blessing us all...donors, volunteers and recipients alike.



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TABLE TALK

The history of Table Talk and a reminder of what it's all about

Table Talk was “birthed” in 2020 (in the middle of COVID!) as part of the strategic focus around evangelism and is currently Trinity’s main evangelistic initiative. In essence, evangelism involves “reaching out” to those in our circles and the broader community and, as such, falls under and is financed by the Reach Out portfolio.

Since its inception, we have had two 6-week evening runs, two 6-week morning runs, a once-off evening event and a full day Saturday event. The main aim of Table Talk is to provide a platform for people, specifically non-churchgoers or those who have become disillusioned by their faith, to hear a faith response to some of life’s “big questions” (Does God exist? Is Jesus important? What is the meaning of life? What is Hope? Why is the world so broken and evil? Why be a Christian?) and to have the chance to share their own views and ask their own questions, while sharing a meal or tea with others. One of our main goals is for it to be a non-threatening, non-judgemental, warm and open space so that anyone and everyone feels welcome to attend.

A reflection on the 2023 offerings

There were three Table Talk offerings this year: a once-off evening event at Farina (the restaurant over the road from Trinity), a full day Saturday event and a 6-week morning run, the first two being formats that we tried for the first time this year.



The Farina event, held in a rather chilly July, was our first attempt at taking Table Talk offsite and it turned out to be a really special evening. The different and possibly more relaxed location provided the perfect setting for the sharing of delicious pizzas, some light and more serious discussion and a talk by John on “Why is evolution an essential truth for Christians, atheists and agnostics?”. The evening was well suited to a diverse group of people and was enjoyed by about 60 people of varying ages (13 to 70+), cultures and beliefs (and hopefully the staff and others having meals at Farina on the night too!). The interesting, intriguing and relevant topic generated a lot of discussion and provided a lot of food for thought!



August and September were busy months for Table Talk with the morning run and Saturday event taking place. The morning run was held over 6 weeks, with each week focusing on one of the “big questions”. The 6-week journey is special in that it provides a more gradual and extended period of learning and growth with time in-between each week to reflect on what has been heard and discussed. The fellowship, meeting new people and enjoying a cup of tea/coffee and snacks within the groups is also a highlight for those who attend.





The Saturday event required some creative thinking to fit a 6-week journey into one day. Five of the six questions were spread over the day in three talks, with time also for discussion, attendees getting responses to some of their own questions, hearing some testimonies and, of course, having some time for lunch and tea. We also added in some fun with an interesting game of Name Bingo being played! While the day was full and, for some, a bit overwhelming, the general sense was that it was very meaningful.



The impact of each of the Table Talk offerings this year (and in previous years) on the participants, facilitators and the rest of the team has been really special to witness. The insight gained and the sense of moving closer to God as a result of attending Table Talk seems to have been a common outcome of each Table Talk so far. Of the 17 people who completed an evaluation form at the end of the morning run, 14 reported that they felt a sense of moving closer to God and have gained further understanding about the Christian faith as a result of the Table Talk journey, with 11 people joining in the prayer of response with John at the end of one or more of his talks. The Saturday event, although a much shorter experience, had a similar impact with 23 of the 26 who filled out an evaluation form having felt a sense of moving closer to God and 23 having gained further understanding about the Christian faith.

The feedback in general has been really encouraging with participants having the following to say:

"Table Talk left me wanting to grow deeper and closer to the vision, love of God"

"I've heard some brilliant new and insightful thoughts that I feel will catalyse a renewed faith journey"

"The info from the talks was relevant to my life and has given me many thoughts on how to move forward in my growth"

Table Talk has been a special and meaningful experience for churchgoers too. It has provided a space for them to learn more and grow spiritually and for those in a difficult place, those who have drifted away or those with a desire to reconnect. It has also provided an opportunity for people to become better equipped to answer other people's questions and to evangelise and to find out more about Table Talk to potentially invite others in future.

Table Talk is not only meaningful to the participants, but to the team too...

"One of the most special things about being involved in Table Talk is the team and team work element of it. It is not possible for one person to pull off the different events/runs we've had so far and it's so amazing to see how so many people come together with their different gifts and talents to make this happen. About 300 people have been involved in some way in Table Talk so far (either as participants or part of the team or both) – that is really special!"

Plans for 2024 (and beyond)

The biggest challenge so far has been reaching non-churchgoers and getting Trinity members to successfully invite non-churchgoers to Table Talk. This is something we hope to overcome in the near future. To this end, we encourage you to keep inviting your friends, family members, neighbours, colleagues, etc. to various church events, including Table Talk, in the hope that they will one day say "yes" and have the opportunity to experience something special and a turning or returning to Jesus.

The Table Talk team is constantly adapting the model in response to our assessments of strengths and weakness of the events we organise. However, it is not easy to decide what adaptation might actually take us away from the goal we have of presenting the good news of Jesus in a thorough and compelling way.

Our proposed plans for 2024 are as follows (*subject to change*):

- Another **Farina event** in April with a different catchy topic.
- An **offsite morning run** at one of the retirement villages in the area. The plan is to reduce it to 4 weeks and the proposed dates are Wednesday mornings 15, 22, 29 May and 5 June.
- An **evening run** at Trinity held over 4 weeks on Wednesday evenings 9, 16, 23 and 30 October.

In 2024 we also hope to explore different ways of marketing and different prayer strategies around Table Talk and evangelism and having talks shared by John at places/platforms like U3A and TGIF.

Our prayer is that Table Talk will only grow going forward and that it will continue to have the same impact on those who attend and are involved. Will you commit to helping us make this happen?

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### ***CHANGING OF THE GUARD***

Next year Ockert de Wet will be stepping into the role of chairperson of the Reach Out portfolio. He replaces Alan Kitchen who has served faithfully in the role twice in the last 10 years. We are grateful for the way in which Alan has led the portfolio and his dedication, hard work and selfless service have been appreciated by the members of the portfolio and, no doubt, the organisations that we serve. Thank you, Alan! We also wish Ockert all the best as he steps into the role and pray God's guidance as he leads the portfolio and its activities.

We posed a few questions to Alan and Ockert as the outgoing and incoming chairpersons.



#### **Q&A with Alan**

*1. Who is Alan outside of Trinity and Reach Out?*

I was a town planner/project manager before my retrenchment/retirement in 2021. I am married to Louise with 2 adult (married) children and we are awaiting our first grandchild in December. My interests include DIY/carpentry, gardening, nature, walking/hiking, and keeping abreast of current international, national and civic affairs. I enjoy being challenged to move out of my comfort zone. I try to be a "practical idealist" with a continuing desire to "make the world a better place".

*2. How long were you the chairperson for?*

I am not entirely sure. Looking back, I think I took over from Ike Moloabi around mid-2013 until approximately September 2017, when I had to step down as chairperson due to work commitments, and then resumed the position again from May 2022 (when Andrew Shillinglaw moved to Pretoria) to the present.

*3. Why/how did you get involved in Reach Out?*

I have always been involved in some form of church related social service activity since my teenage years. Louise and I joined Trinity, I think, at the beginning of 2011, and Neil Oosthuizen, the then minister, used to give notice of the upcoming portfolio meetings for the week during Sunday services, together with an invitation to people to attend the meetings. I attended one Reach Out meeting and decided that was where I could best serve.

*4. What has been your greatest challenge in the role?*

Two challenges: Firstly, I have had to accept that the types of organisations with which we are involved invariably go through cycles of growth, decline and restructuring/reorganisation. It is difficult in this kind of environment to maintain the level of interaction with the different organisations and their office bearers to ensure that the financial support we give them is well used and adequately reported upon. Secondly, getting more people to join the portfolio and to take direct responsibility for one or more of the portfolio's activities or projects.

*5. What has felt like your greatest accomplishment in the role?*

One of the greatest personal accomplishments achieved during my tenure was the construction in 2022 of a permanent dwelling structure for Thompson Ngobeni, the pastor at the Orange Farm Place of Hope, to replace his old dilapidated wooden Wendy house. I am also always amazed at the extent to which the congregation supports the portfolio's activities.

*6. What have you learnt?*

I have learnt that God does not expect us to be perfect in our efforts to serve Him. He only expects us to do what we can in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. In short, we can only do our best and must let God do the rest (and He invariably surprises us with what is achieved!).

*7. What now?*

I hope to continue being part of the Reach Out team for the foreseeable future, possibly taking responsibility for one or two specific projects. I would also like to find an opportunity to assist with the forthcoming national and provincial elections next year, ideally in a non party political manner.





## **Q&A with Ockert**

### *1. Who is Ockert outside of Trinity and Reach Out?*

I am a person with a broad set of interests. I love nature and outdoors, so gardening is a big passion. I enjoy learning new things so I am furthering my studies, I read widely and I write as well. I love beauty so I combine travel with visiting art galleries, beautiful architecture, botanical gardens and pristine nature. Lastly, I love a sense of togetherness, so I enjoy socialising with loved ones around good food.

### *2. Why/how did you get involved in Reach Out?*

My mom always instilled in me the values of care, community and social justice. Before Covid we got involved in a soup kitchen and really walked a path with both the homeless and the people who serve them, which really opened my eyes. Over the years, I was involved in many different church ministries, but outreach has become the dearest to my heart because the need is so big, but the opportunity for real impact is even bigger. When you see the sense of community, gratitude, humanity and commitment of so many unsung heroes, it truly opens your heart.

### *3. What area(s) of Reach Out are you most passionate about?*

For me there is no single ministry I can single out, but the common themes are marginalised communities and people who cannot advocate for themselves. There is great despair in South Africa, but we can have so much impact on the homeless, elderly, youth, under-served communities and the environment. Every bit helps and I believe the future of South Africa lies in the hands of moral institutions like churches.

### *4. What are your goals/plans as you step into the role?*

My biggest goal is to ensure reach out is a critical part of every congregation member's spiritual journey. For many years my faith was very inward focused but when I started reaching out, I received spiritual gift of grace, gratitude and humility. When we interact with people outside our normal circles, we move beyond our differences and discover our shared humanity and unity in God which really strengthens our faith.

### ***HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?***

- Pray for the different organisations we support and the activities we're involved in through the year.
- Make donations (monetary and other) towards the various drives and other ad hoc requests.
- Participate in the activities/events organised through the year.
- Become a member of the Reach Out Portfolio to be involved in the overall management and co-ordination of the various projects and activities.
- Join one of the sub-committees (Mozambique, Table Talk) to be involved in the organisation around more specific projects and activities.

### ***WHAT'S COMING UP IN 2024?***

Mark your calendars with these activities happening in 2024. Look out for more details on each in the congregational correspondence and/or bulletin.

|                                   | WHAT                               | WHEN                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1<sup>st</sup><br/>QUARTER</b> | Easter Egg Drive                   | 18 February – 17 March                                                |
|                                   | Easter Egg Packing                 | Sunday 24 March                                                       |
|                                   | Holiday Club                       | 25 – 28 March                                                         |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup><br/>QUARTER</b> | Blanket Drive                      | 14 April – 12 May                                                     |
|                                   | Table Talk – Farina Event          | Wednesday 24 April                                                    |
|                                   | Table Talk – Morning Run (offsite) | Wednesdays 15 May – 5 June                                            |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup><br/>QUARTER</b> | Mozambique Mission                 | End of June/beginning of July<br><i>(exact dates to be confirmed)</i> |
|                                   | Community Service Day sign-up      | 28 July – 19 August                                                   |
|                                   | Community Service Day              | Saturday 24 August                                                    |
|                                   | Pop Up Play Place                  | 23 – 27 September                                                     |
| <b>4<sup>th</sup><br/>QUARTER</b> | Table Talk – Evening Run           | Wednesdays 9 – 30 October                                             |
|                                   | Orange Farm Christmas Gift Appeal  | 20 October – 24 November                                              |
|                                   | Orange Farm Christmas Party        | Saturday 7 December                                                   |

God Bless  
The Trinity Reach Out Portfolio

*If you would like to join the Reach Out Portfolio or find out more about any of the Reach Out activities and how to get involved, please contact Ockert de Wet (082 567 7325 or [ojdewet@gmail.com](mailto:ojdewet@gmail.com))*