

# THE IMPACT OF THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION TO THE COMMUNITY OF VIVA FOUNDATION (MAMELODI EAST)

## INTRODUCTION

The University of Pretoria since the beginning of this year (2017) is celebrating its 100-year centenary of its operation (existence). This is a fundamental year to the Faculty of Theology and Religion of the University of Pretoria. The vital purpose of this centenary celebration is to make it clear to all people (of different cultures, languages, and races) that its gate is always opened to all churches and all various communities to enter through to the Faculty of Theology and Religion as it now accommodates everyone.

From the *Missiological Perspective*, the opening of the gate signify that the Faculty of Theology and Religion now acknowledge the two important movements: **centripetal and centrifugal movements**. By *Centripetal Movement*, the faculty opened its gate to various churches and communities from all over the globe to enter to the Faculty of Theology and Religion through its gate with ease. By *Centrifugal Movement*, the faculty opened its gate so that its adherents can go out through it to give service to the communities with ease.

## VIVA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



Figure 1: Leaders of Viva Community Development Project

[From left is Dr. MA (Albert) Mutavhatsindi representing *The Faculty of Theology and Religion of the University of Pretoria – Department Science of Religion and Missiology*, and Rev Leon Kriel and his wife Merenley Kriel representing *The Viva Foundation of South Africa*]

The Department Science of Religion and Missiology is offering a module to (the) students who are doing BTh and also to those who are doing Diploma (GSW 310/14). *In this module, the focus is on what a congregation should do, and how it should be done once she has decided to get involved in the communities of Southern Africa in the context of the 21st Century. It is about a strategy for the mission of the Church, the resources needed, and basic skills to plan life-giving practices with congregations and communities.* In brief, this module has more practical work than theory. The students who are doing this module are obliged to practice their skills and knowledge to the community. We chose to do our Community Development Project to the community of Viva informal settlement (Mamelodi East). GSW 310/14 students are sincerely engaging themselves in Community Development Project to this undeveloped community. During the first and the second quarter(s) this year (2017), our students visited the families of Viva Community members researching about their life situation. The research focuses on the following dimensions of the community members:

- Their social issues
- Their health conditions
- The spiritual (religious) issues

The other areas that were dealt with in the research were the paramount issues at stake like, *poverty, unemployment, crime, and security* which are seriously disquieting this

community. The Department of Science of Religion and Missiology in this project is working in collaboration with Viva Foundation of South Africa. This project is well accepted by both the community of Viva and also by Viva Foundation of South Africa (our partner). This was confirmed by Rev Leon Kriel in his welcoming speech during the **coming together function held at Viva Foundation on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017** with the students from the Faculty of Theology and Religion (Department Science of Religion and Missiology), Viva Community Members and Staff and Children of Viva Foundation of South Africa.

**WORDS OF APPRECIATING THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA’S STUDENTS TO THE PROJECT OF DEVELOPING VIVA COMMUNITY**

*Rev Leon Kriel*



“On behalf of the Viva community, I am glad to see the University of Pretoria doing this marvelous work to our community (Viva). We really appreciate with our sincere hearts this wonderful work. It is really rare to see the Lecturer and his students from the University coming to the place like Viva village. We are really lucky to witness this project that the University of Pretoria and Viva Foundation of South Africa are doing to this community. I sincerely thank Dr. Mutavhatsindi who is leading the students from the University of Pretoria to this Community Project. In conclusion, I want to say that this partnership between the Faculty of Theology (University of Pretoria) and Viva Foundation of South

Africa must continue to eternity as it is developing our community”.

**RESPOND BY THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

*Dr. MA (Albert) Mutavhatsindi*

“Thank you very much Program Director for giving me this time and opportunity to speak on behalf of *The Department Science of Religion and Missiology* - one of the Departments at *The Faculty of Theology and Religion* of the *University of Pretoria*. I also want to thank the staff members (especially Rev Leon Kriel and Merenley), children of Viva Foundation of South Africa for partnering with us in Viva Community Development Project. I also want to thank the community members for allowing us to visit them. The University of Pretoria invest on the community, that is why it goes to the people”.



Figure 2: Picture of Viva Staff, UP students and some of Viva Community members



Figure 3: Picture of Viva Children who entertained people on the day of coming together

## WORDS OF APPRECIATION BY STUDENTS FROM THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

A student, Nkombezekwa K, who spoke on behalf of the students from the Faculty of Theology and Religion appreciated the work that is being done to the community of Viva. He said, “As future ministers of the Word we appreciate our engagement to the project like this one. Our coming together resemble our unity and love. It reminds me the communion table of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ accommodates all people from different backgrounds (riches and poor) and people of all ages (men, women, and children) and also from all cultures. We came to the Viva because of our love to this community. The theology that we are learning at the University of Pretoria encourages us to impart the knowledge that we have to the community. This implies that serving the community is highly encouraged at our University. I also want to thank Viva Foundation of South Africa for collaborating with the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology (Faculty of Theology and Religion) in coming up with the project of Developing Viva Community. Let these two partners (*The Department of Science of Religion and Missiology* and *Viva Foundation of South Africa*) continue to impart knowledge to our community and also to give hope to those who are hopeless”.

## WORDS OF APPRECIATION BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF VIVA COMMUNITY



Figure 4: A representative of Viva Community Members who appreciated the work that the Faculty of Theology (Students from

the Department Science of Religion and Missiology) together with Viva Foundation of South Africa are doing to Viva Community

## VOTE OF THANKS BY MRS MERENLEY KRIEL



“To have this exchange, and I know it has been meaningful both ways. I am sure for students your hearts have been touched and in the same way you have also touched the hearts of the families that you visited. I am very much sure that you have also touched our hearts. I am glad to have this opportunity to close this ceremony with a song. I will close this session by singing my favorite Sotho song”

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to stress the reality that our communities today are facing a lot of challenges which need the assistance by the higher institutions (like universities) that will do a thorough research on the paramount issues at stake of the communities like unemployment, poverty etc. and come up with the ways and means of assisting the communities on those issues. Community Development Project will be one of the urgent need of the communities as it will bring solution to most of the paramount issues at stake, like *poverty* and *unemployment*. What the Faculty of Theology and Religion (through the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology) is doing to the undeveloped community of Viva is very fundamental and it must continue even in the following years. I say so because this project is bringing change to people’s lives.