

PE Emmaus Community Lay Director's Report

September 2017

Overview

With a set of successful Flights (the first in two years), a set of successful Walks, seven fellowship and fundraising events, the introduction of surveys to get a better understanding of challenges and improved communication initiatives, we can be pleased with our efforts for 2017. We are ever mindful however that none of this would have happened without the Grace of God – He made the impossible possible (... when you have just five pilgrim applications a week before cut off etc.)

Vision

A strategic session early in 2017 gave rise to the following five-year vision for the PE Emmaus Community. It should be:

A vibrant, financially viable Christian Community offering regular fellowship and other opportunities before and after full Flights and Walks in growing God's kingdom

A **Health Check** (with 13 of the 21 questions affirmative) showed a marginal improvement year-on-year but certainly with room for improvement – and hence the strategic brainstorming session on what needed to be implemented to achieve the above.

Pre- and post- flight and walk initiatives were identified as key areas for improvement, and hence the following plans were introduced around:

- Offering more events to build fellowship and grow coffers
- Building relationships with churches e.g. growing our own church Emmaus communities
- Improving communication e.g. revamping the website, Facebook page
- Adding value to the community e.g. introducing a business data base for members to allow for support of Emmaus community members

Events

In 2017 we successfully hosted the following:

- **Music trivia** early in March for ten teams raised R6400 at a Presbyterian Church
- A **camping weekend** at Sitrusoewer outside Kirkwood from March 24 to 26 with 62 Emmaus community members camping. More came for the bring and braai session
- An **Emmaus Reunion Tea for Ladies** at an Anglican Church with tables hosted by 16 previous lay directors on 27 May, raising more than R13 000.
- **Music trivia** at a Methodist Church raised about R8000 on 10 June.
- A **praise and worship** session on 5 August at another Methodist Church provided an opportunity for musicians to brush up their skills.
- A **raffle** for Karoo lamb raised about R8000
- **Music trivia** will be hosted in Kenton-on-Sea on 28 October

As indicated, these events are as much about “keeping the Emmaus fire burning” as raising funds. While on paper, these events fall under the treasury portfolio, Board members helped spread the load, by running various initiatives – hence the spread of churches and exposure of the Emmaus movement to different audiences.

Flights

The first Flights in two years were successfully held from July (7 – 9 Girls; 14 – 16 Boys) at a new venue. We had 24 girl and 21 boy caterpillars.

It was not an easy process for various reasons but God honoured our obedience, and it was gratifying to see so many of these butterflies sponsor their own parents at the following Walks.

While we endeavoured to stick to EMSA deadlines, they proved unrealistic in many instances. The Lay Directors were Twinkels Davies and Lucian Jantjies.

Walks

We were also blessed with Walks 69 and 70 on September 7 to 11 (men) and 14 to 17 (women) with 24 and 35 pilgrims respectively. Larry Pow Chong and Pat Rheeder were the Lay Directors.

Learning from the lessons of the past, and for the need to be pro-active, the dates for the 2018 Walks are already in place. As at 25 September, we had 18 women signed up to work. The call for team and good sponsorship will be reiterated at the Gathering in mid-October. The Community will host two sets of Walks in 2018 (at R950 a person).

Challenges

Ensuring the success or even the implementation of these Flights and Walks did not come easy. A survey revealed that more than half of those who worked had been personally approached to join the team. Very few had volunteered. A survey to establish why people do not volunteer etc will be shared online as a means of identifying the underlying challenges (too costly, a lack of interest, work commitments, too big a commitment in terms of time, poor training etc) and adapting our plans going forward. Funding continues to challenge the Board as many enthusiastic community members are unable to pay the necessary fees.

Fulfilling key portfolios on the board and establishing functional sub-committees also continues to be a challenge, along with a drop in the number of Accountability Groups. Traditionally, this is where the best sponsorship of pilgrims and support for the movement comes from.

Portfolios

The PE Emmaus Community chose not to appoint Assistant Community Directors with a walk and flight portfolio as we did not want the responsibility of either to lay with one person, but rather to lie with the entire board. Given the challenge of finding suitable replacements to various portfolios, the chances of securing support for these other positions – if we are forced to follow EMSA’s directive – it is unlikely to be easy. Many of those approached are reluctant to join the Board since they wish to work on the Walks/Flights.

We presently do not have anyone in the ICT/Communication role.

The outreach portfolio introduced a plan of reaching out to five new churches. At least three were reached in conjunction with our Community Spiritual Director Rev Andrea Potgieter. A letter to ministers whose congregants have either completed a Walk or Flight asking for their financial support has been drafted but will only be distributed early next year.

Board meetings

The Board, however, has worked exceptionally hard to ensure the success of 2017. We have had a meeting every month, and many other sub-committee meetings too. The team selection portfolio meets regularly, while a support committee was formed in the run-up to the Flights as we devised various plans to ignite a fire that had long grown cold. As intimated, it took a great deal of effort from a dedicated few individuals to ensure the success of our Flights and Walks, albeit that our efforts started early with calls to the community via news flashes.

Budget

We are in a financially secure position – but a long way from having a reserve of R60 000 in the back. Our monthly contributions are up and we were blessed with income from many events.

Communication

We have worked hard to improve our communication with **monthly news flashes, regular prayer requests and the updating of information on our website and Facebook pages**. The latter is no longer by invitation only – as part of our commitment towards dispelling the secrecy myth around Emmaus. We are in the process of creating a shared page since all Emmaus programmes fall under one board now.

We distributed a survey on the effectiveness of training for both Chrysalis and Emmaus as a means of improving what we presently offer. The “hurry up and wait” complaint, particularly by team serving in support, showed us the value of fitting training into two, one-and-a-half day sessions instead of two, two-full day sessions. This has been much appreciated.

Another survey to establish why community members do not come to work on team will be shared to further inform our plans going forward.

The introduction of a data base containing business contacts was introduced to add value to the Community.

Way forward

All of these efforts are towards the five-year goal of becoming

A vibrant, financially viable Christian Community offering regular fellowship and other opportunities before and after full Flights and Walks in growing God’s kingdom

We are on a journey. While the first year has been a sprint – a massive effort by small committed group of people – we trust that we will be able to slow down to a mild job for the road ahead. Patience, perseverance and of course, prayer are consistently needed.

And, we as a Board, are reminded of this whenever a pilgrim or butterfly testifies as to how their life has changed. But more to the point, how they are committed to changing the lives of others as a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To God be the Glory!

De Colores and Fly with Christ.

Community Lay Director

Debbie Derry