

Sunday School in Matlosane

The Matlosane Conference 2015 equipped 65 Sunday School leaders, supported with a team from Lichfield Diocese. The team members were Chris and Chenda Nuttall, Cheryl Powell, Sarah Bennett, Sarah Witcombe, Marcus Brookfield, Val Plant, Jo Williams and Catherine Stephens. The team raised over £10,000 to fund the trip.

"The team were asked to go back in 2015 to build upon the foundations laid at the first Matlosane Conference, in 2012. I was asked to lead the team having been part of the 2012 trip, and originally because of my involvement in children's work" said Chenda Nuttall.

"Matlosane is a partner diocese with Lichfield and that is why there is a desire to see Sunday school leaders equipped and enabled.

"What makes it so special is a combination of two things - the passion of the team to reach children with the gospel, and the openness of our African friends to welcome us, to catch the vision and learn.

"We do this knowing that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and wherever you are in the world. By sharing in fellowship

The team from Lichfield Diocese on their last day with the bishop of Matlosane, Rt Revd Steve Diseko



with other believers we see a glimpse of the worldwide family of Christ.

"The team worked hard, running bible groups, how-to-teach sessions, target groups and skills sessions. We stood by as the delegates put their new learning into practice and ran an event for children who had come in for the afternoon. Above all we made friends that we were sorry to say goodbye to.

As we started the conference, we used the song we had taught in 2012. It seemed to thaw the atmosphere immediately and get us off to a good start. As we taught the 2015 theme song "All through History" we sensed that God was truly there and that delegates were thirsty to learn more, not just of how to teach children, but of God. Together we experienced the truth of the song that God is 'just the same when it comes to me'.

"I think the Lichfield team stepped out of their comfort zones. They taught groups, led bible studies and shared their stories. The delegates were excited about teaching children that God is just the same when it comes to them.

"Our God was faithful as we looked to Him for energy and sometimes courage. Following the conference we were able to visit two schools; experiencing a wonderful welcome and hopefully building the foundations of a continuing relationship. At both schools we were able to leave puppets from the goody bags that the delegates received - 5



Worshipping at the church of St Mary's Koster

puppets each as a result of the amazing support that St James, Clayton and other churches had given in knitting them.

"The team had a rest day in Pilanesberg game park, enjoying the animals and then gave the congregation at St Mary's, Koster a glimpse of the teaching from the conference and donated the wonderful pictures that Catherine had painted for the conference to their 'not yet finished' church. Visual presentation of the bible may not be quite what they were used to for the sermon but it was much appreciated by many who came up to thank us afterwards.

"Reaching the end of the conference was a bitter sweet moment. We came back via the Apartheid museum - a sobering reminder of all that South Africa and our friends have had to deal with. The warmth of the hospitality from



Far left: Artwork created by delegates. Left: Puppets created by the knitters of St James', Clayton. Right: Taking a school assembly.

Bishop Steve, Brenda and many others will remain with us as a highlight of our stay, as will the benefits and joys of working as a team with other children's workers and learning from each other."

Vitalise held a 12-hour, 5-a-side charity football match, raising money for Revd Jo Williams and the trip to Matlosane, as well as for Ward 15 of Birmingham



children's hospital. Played on the pitches outside All Saints Church, Wolverhampton, the football was not the only attraction, with indoor facilities, refreshments and a film in the evening for those nursing weary legs.

"Community groups and other churches and faith groups were invited, so there was an ecumenical and interfaith flavour to the whole thing. We think about 55 people played and refereed.

"The final score was a 144-all draw! No idea how that happened. As well as raising money for a good cause, hopefully we provided people with opportunities to makes friends and connections with people they would not have met" said Deborah Walton, leader of Wolverhampton Pioneer Ministry.



Find out more about the link between Lichfield and Matlosane Dioceses through the blog updated by visitors from this diocese: www.matlosanematters.blogspot.co.uk/