



## Roots & Branches Programs for Spiritual Growth

The Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF *Director*



February 1, 2019

Would you like to help support young adults in their quest to be leaders promoting peacemaking, social justice, and reconciliation with a spiritual foundation? Here is your opportunity.

Last June, I along with my associate, the Rev. Charles Kramer, successfully presented *Agents of Peace in a Time of Fear* as a part of the Volmoed Youth Leadership Programme in South Africa. Our three-day program, a component within a larger nine-week program, had a powerful impact on the participants' lives, giving them tools to approach a hard, often abusive world proactively with God's love rather than reactively with the anger of the world.

The leadership of Volmoed (an Anglican priest of the Church of Southern Africa) has asked *Agents of Peace* to return with an even more extensive program for the next two to three years to both guide more young people and to eventually train leaders there to take over the program. This is only possible with support from generous partners who appreciate the value of this ministry of empowerment. Since most of the money raised by the Volmoed Programme goes to provide scholarships for the young adult participants, it is necessary for those of us who are presenters to raise funds for our travel expenses and fees. Volmoed provides our room, board, and ground travel while in South African. We ask that as you consider outreach opportunities for 2019, you will consider the Roots & Branches *Agents of Peace* program. This year's program is scheduled for July 10-20. It is an expansion of last year's program, including the talent of a young South African whom I have added to our team who is dedicated to faith-supported social justice and reconciliation. Our total cost for travel and fees will be \$8,000.00. Whatever you can contribute towards *Agents of Peace 2019* will be greatly appreciated.



## Roots & Branches Programs for Spiritual Growth

The Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF *Director*

The eleven young people who participated in the Volmoed Youth Leadership Programme last year ranged in age from 17 to 27. They came from all corners of South Africa - as well as from South Korea. They crossed denominational lines, language barriers, and large wealth gaps. Their life situations ranged from comfortable to harsh.



The total Volmoed Youth Leadership Programme lasts nine weeks. Prior to the start of our portion of the program, we spent time getting to know participants and developing trust. We believed this was crucial to the effectiveness of the program since the participants had been together for five weeks prior to our arrival.

We began by getting to know the participants, especially their life situations which included poverty, domestic abuse, drugs, racism and sexism. Then, through scripture study, meditation, and intentionally structured worship, we reinforced their awareness of the Presence of God in their lives to equip, guide, and strengthen them to do the work of God in the midst of adverse situations.

We then explored case studies of people who experienced trauma and evil yet found positive ways to move through trauma to empowerment, from victimhood to being active *Agents of Peace*. We provided emotional space for participants to make connections with their own lives and to consider what a positive proactive response might look like.

Next, we practiced skills that can help in the work of being an Agent of Peace. These include meditative, spiritually grounded singing, especially employing music of the Taizé community. Primary among the skills is attentive listening. For this, we have exercises leading participants to truly hear conversation partners for what they are saying rather than simply listening for argumentation points.

The final leg of the journey in becoming Agents of Peace is to return to the issues each participant faces, and for each to develop a project to address one issue. This involves long periods of silent reflection and journaling time, culminating in the presentation of their plans. Projects the Volmoed youth presented this past year included a dance company with choreographic themes of social justice and reconciliation, a drug-abuse intervention program, and a domestic abuse hotline.

We believe the work we did helped empower our participants to move through and beyond the concerns and challenges of their current situations, and to bring positive actions to the negative elements in their settings.



## Roots & Branches Programs for Spiritual Growth

The Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF *Director*

**Please make your check payable to Roots & Branches, and mail to: Roots & Branches; 35 Circle Drive; Hyde Park, NY 12538. Or donate on our website:  
[www.rootsandbranchesprograms.org](http://www.rootsandbranchesprograms.org)**

May God bless you and the work we can do together,  
*The Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah TSSF, Director*