



## **New Chairman for IofC International**

**Professor Gerald Pillay**, Vice-Chancellor & Rector of Liverpool Hope University has recently been elected as President of Initiatives of Change International, starting his term of service on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.



Prof Pillay was born in South Africa where he grew up under apartheid. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Rhodes University and a Doctor of Theology degree from the University of Durban. After lecturing at the University of Durban-Westville, he became Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of South Africa, in Pretoria, in 1988 and at that time was introduced to the work of MRA, now Initiatives of Change (IofC).

In 1997 he became Foundation Professor and Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Otago University in New Zealand.

Appointed Rector of Liverpool Hope University College in 2003, he became Liverpool Hope University's first Vice-Chancellor in 2005 when the institution was given full University status.

In 2018 his contribution to education was celebrated in a collection of essays entitled '*Internationalising Higher Education: From South Africa to England via New Zealand*', edited by Professors Hoffie Hofmeyr and John Stenhouse.

In accepting his election to serve as President of IofC International, Pillay said, "This fellowship (of Initiatives of Change) centres around an important mission to the world. The mission to heal, to reconcile and to be honest brokers wherever God places us."

Quoting Frank Buchman speaking in 1936, Pillay continued, "The root problems in the world today are dishonesty, selfishness and fear in men and women and consequently in nations. These evils

multiplied result in divorce, crime, unemployment, recurrent depression and war. Our instant need is a moral and spiritual awakening. Human wisdom alone has failed to bring this about.' "He (Buchman) could have given that speech today.

"The world has changed radically since those decades between the two world wars. Who then could have imagined this globalised, inter-connected existence we have today ..... so much has changed and so much is the same.

"Have we made as much progress morally as we have made in technology and space travel?

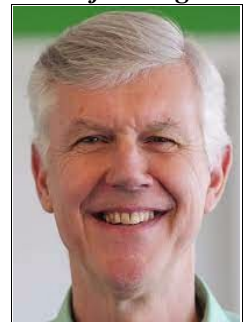
This mission we share, to use Buchman's words of a 'moral and spiritual awakening', this mission to be agents of this change, is needed as much now as it was 90 years ago.

All of us, whichever culture we are in, have an equal responsibility in this mission to our world. The mission is what we inherit. The strategies to achieve it require new ideas, new ways of working and a renewed commitment and to hard work. Ours is not an NGO for social change. Nor is it just another philanthropic movement committed to altruism and good works. Ours rises from our faith in God and a belief that as we site the great Mahatma, that we must be the change that we seek in the world.

I look forward to meeting you all in some way. Please keep me in your prayers.

***At the Global Assembly of Initiatives of Change International held on line in September, at which Prof Gerald Pillay was elected, Edward Peters, from England and Sweden, gave a reflection. Here are brief extracts:***

"Today's theme is the state of the movement (Initiatives of Change). I offer one or two reflections. Last weekend the Trustees of IofC in the UK met for our annual retreat – our first in-person meeting since COVID started. Our Chair,



**Margaret Cosens**, did a fantastic job of keeping it as a time of spiritual reflection, and not allowing it to become another business meeting. One of our Trustees, **Nirmala Pillay**, the wife of our next President, reflected on the last lines of a prayer by a 17th century Indian peasant and mystic called Tukaram: 'God is, God loves you, God carries all your worries.' Nirmala highlighted the mystical connection between people of different beliefs which we often take for granted within IofC but which is in fact quite unusual. The creative relationship between mysticism and activism (and the importance in that relationship of the word AND) became the underlying theme of the weekend. **Nathalie Chavanne** from France, another Trustee, said: 'We often seek rapid solutions but God gives us, rather, a road to travel.'

### ***Our weakness is our strength***

"I mention this UK retreat because I believe that keeping our focus on our spiritual unity and our deeper purpose helps us make the right decisions. There is much going on within and through IofC around the world that is a blessed outpouring of the Spirit of the Almighty, carried by dedicated and generous people. As we know there are also significant difficulties. If we are one family, one community, can we carry each other's burdens as well as share in each other's joys?

"Because we believe in the essence of IofC, we want to be strong in projecting it. We want to make a difference in the world, we want IofC to be seen as relevant. But if we are honest, we are weak. We are few, we are overstretched. Could it be that our weakness is in fact our strength? When we are in need, and admit it, we become attractive to others. When we focus on living vulnerably and authentically, the Spirit of the Almighty is free to use us."

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### ***Eu Escuto (I Listen) - A Latin American initiative connecting people who are making a difference in their communities.***

Guatemalan, **Killy Sanchez**, IofC International Web-master, spoke recently on the weekly *I Listen* zoom gathering.

"I want to share an experience with you that was



very difficult. At the same time I thank God for this turning point in my life.

"So to give you context to this experience - My father died when I was 4 yrs old. I had a sister of 5 years old and a 1 year old brother. My mother had to leave us in the care of an employee for the day in order to go to work. We never had luxuries but we never went without a plate of food. My mother did what she could for us. I received a scholarship to go to a good school.

"Not having my father with us was a big sadness for me. I had two sides to my character as a child – one full of joy, creativity and the other was a sad child, depressed and full of fears.

"My mother begged me to work hard and always behave so that I could keep my scholarship at a good school because she could not afford to pay for me to be there. As a child and until I was 25 years old, I felt that I had to work hard at behaving and being a good person.

"In 1972, when I was 25 years of age, I fell into a very deep depression. I tried to work. Became ill. I didn't want to live. Life was a fight. I got to the point where I could not lift myself from my bed. I was so tired. Why had God put me into this life? I spent the days either sleeping or crying. I think the cause of this depression was my tireless effort to always be a "good girl".

"Thank God I never attempted suicide. I wanted God to give me a life. I considered myself a person of faith. I have had a Catholic upbringing.

### ***I can't do it alone***

"At this point, I can really say that God saved me. I said to God, 'Ok, if you want me to get out of this mess, I can't do it alone. You need to lift me up.' And I waited for God to show me.

"One day my mother told me that there are professionals who can help you. I went to a psychologist, then to a psychiatrist. I was given anti-depressants and was able to return to work.

"My bosses invited me to a seminar. I thought it might be of benefit to me, so I went. We were fifteen people. The facilitator began to speak. Everything he said was just as if it was meant for me. I began to see myself as if in a mirror. It began to give me such joy. So many discoveries. I asked questions. Participated fully. "On the second day something magical happened.

We divided into groups of two people each with the question to answer, 'what do I appreciate in you?' - the other person. While I was speaking the other person listened and then we switched roles. We then moved onto listening and speaking with other partners - until each one had had an experience with a different person.

"When we finished, one by one had to stand in front and all the rest and say what they most liked about that person. The only thing the other person was allowed to say was 'thank you'.

"I found it very difficult to receive all these positive comments about me – like 'Killy I love your smile,' 'Killy you have such sparkling eyes,' and so on, but something that everybody repeated was 'Killy I love your enthusiasm.' 'Do you know what enthusiasm means?,' the facilitator asked me. 'En' means inside, 'theos' means God. 'We have seen God within you,' the facilitator said.

"At this point I could not stop crying. This concept of God being within me, loving me, accompanying me was suddenly so real. And he loves me as I am, I don't need to be perfect to have his love. From this day my life changed radically. As a child I had desired the opportunities other friends had with their fathers. Now, at this moment it was like this Father took me by the hand, as a child and took me on adventures.

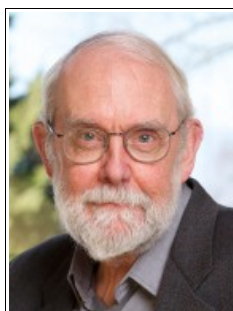
"Life is not a bed of roses. There are moments of living through difficulties and suffering. However, since that day life has been an adventure that I would never have imagined that I could have lived. I look at life so differently now. I received a new life.

"That day a fusion took place between my physical being and my spiritual being. I became an integrated person. God's spirit wrapped around me. Since then I have felt that my mission is to give new life to other people also."

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## ***Food for thought***

**Andrew Stallybrass**, historian, media professional, writer and lay preacher in the Vaud Reformed Church parish. For fifty years, he was part of the team carrying and planning the international conferences for Initiatives of



Change (Moral Re-Armament) in Caux, Switzerland. Andrew, together with his wife Eliane and a small team of others are working hard on developing a living archive of IofC, Moral Re-Armament and Oxford Group archival material – plays, songs, photos, articles, publications etc.

Andrew was asked recently to give a talk at the 43rd International Forum of IofC Japan. Well worth a read.... the link to this talk is:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:a34c7a9c-41c2-4848-8c7c-7f460a235610>



## **Creators of Peace**

### ***My Pain Doesn't Define Me - Creators of Peace in Gugulethu, Cape Town***



Three newly trained Creators of Peace (CoP) facilitators, Nompindulo Mathe (left), Nosabatha Lubuzo (top right)



and Nomonde Qondiso (bottom centre), who went through a Peace Circle (PC) and then facilitator training by Cleo Mohlaodi and Gladys Mabe in December 2020 and

more recently training with Kenyan, Dan Mugera, between them facilitated two Peace Circles (PCs) in September in their home suburb of Gugulethu, Cape Town.

Despite cold and windy weather, 15 women between the ages of 21-36 years participated in the first PC and inner healing workshop, and six ladies aged between 19-59 years at the second PC. Honest conversations took place, shaped by the need to unpack their past challenges and find healing.

Many of the participants originally come from the Eastern Cape, moving to Cape Town looking for work and to further their studies. Ninety percent recently matriculated and are mostly unemployed. They settled in Gugulethu, a densely populated township, approx. 600 kms from their original homes. Many come from broken families, have



lost family members, face financial challenges, have had teenage pregnancies, had to raise their children as single parents and experienced gender based violence. On top of this, some have had to raise their siblings too. Lack of family support, communication and unity were the most shared feelings.

The participants came to the PC with eagerness and open minds to share and learn from each other. "Workshops like this are needed in our broken communities," said Nokululama. "I learnt that when I have a problem I have to face it and find a way of addressing it instead of pretending everything is ok and (in the process) find inner peace," expressed Noneka.



Expectations of finding inner peace, finding means and ways of dealing with anger, being equipped on how to become true to your feelings and emotions and how to deal with family conflicts, were subjects that were most appreciated. "I have learnt that it is important to address issues regardless of the conflicts rather than keeping quiet while you are broken inside," expressed Nolubabalo. Mihle, said, "I am really grateful to participate in the CoP workshop. I'm now able to understand more what builds or destroys my inner peace."

The mother of one of the participants from the first PC attended the second PC. This really encouraged facilitator Nompendulo, because she felt that this shows that family trust building is needed for the communities. In the participant's evaluation of the CoP Circle 70% indicated that they would recommend it to family, especially parents and siblings, and 30% would recommend it to community and friends. At the end of the workshop, participant Zandile said, "Thank you facilitators for giving us time and space to sit and talk about our traumatic experiences. Thank you for listening and showing us the importance of listening constructively without interrupting and judgement."

Fourteen of the participants will attend a follow-up session in three weeks' time, and build a 'Buddy' (accompaniment) network. They have set up goals

for personal and family communication and working on anger issues. "Thank you for bringing this inner healing workshop to bring back hope and love in our lives," said Miranda.

*Report by Nompendulo Mathe, Nosabatha Lubuzo and Nomonde Qondiso*

### ***The Depth of Grief made Happiness Seem Impossible - Peace Circles in Olievenhoutbosch, Tshwane***

Creators of Peace (CoP) has been busy again in Olievenhoutbosch, west of Pretoria. The Olievenhoutbosch Development Association Centre was the host and venue. Cleo Mohlaodi, Gladys Mabe and Galetshwane Sibeko were facilitators for two Peace Circles (PCs) during October, three days each. A total of 38 participants, including seven men attended the PCs throughout.



Many of the participants come originally from Limpopo Province in the north of South Africa. They came to the city looking for work opportunities and to finish their schooling. The expectations of the PC groups were to find healing, deal with past traumas, learn to trust again, boost self confidence, improve communication skills, and mostly, learn how to control anger and how to forgive.



***Group discussions and sharing. Galetshwane Sibeko, trainee facilitator, on right***

The 'Power of forgiveness' sessions unearthed deep

hurts that people bore. Participation in group therapy and being able to write down their painful experiences and then burn the papers on which the experiences were written in a small fire provided, was an important symbolic act of letting go. Through this participants could come to the point of inviting new positive things in their lives and commit to change.

One participant said, “I want to forgive my mother for not raising me and letting me move from one family to the other while alcohol was the only important thing in her life. I tried committing suicide three times because I felt useless in this world”. This statement was shared during the 'Inner Listening' session where Cleo emphasised the importance of being in silence and listening to the inner voice. The participant continued, “I feel like this anger and hate towards my mother is hindering me to grow out of hurtful experiences around me. I feel like my life is stuck.” One of the men shared that he is now aware that he needs to be a better father to his children and he is willing to do that.



*Lighting candles of commitment for the new journey embarked on*

The importance of listening to others was also looked at. One participant said, “I’ve always thought I am a good listener but this session makes me aware that I’ve always listened in order to give advice whenever someone asks to talk to me. Now I’m aware that just listening can help the next person.” Gladys shared, “Listening can save a life and also be a problem-solver. For example, when you are talking and there is somebody listening, you may be able to find answers within yourself during your own story telling.”

All wanted to be part of a 'Buddy' (accompaniment) network. Some participants requested professional help and were referred to Minah Chabane, the Social Worker, who herself went through a PC in Olivienhoutbosch in May.

Follow-up occasions, linking CoP and building into the Trust Building Programme, focussing on families are envisaged. The first dialogue took place within days of the last PC in Olivienhoutbosch.

The first focus point or 'pillar' (as written in the Trustbuilding Manual), is 'Starting with Yourself' – change starts with me, and this was the subject of this dialogue.

We discussed the question: 'What is the current discouraging conflict that you're facing and leads to you feeling that it cannot be resolved'. A lively and fruitful discussion.

We meet again on the 5th of November. We will be looking at the 'second pillar' - Healing Historical Wounds. We have extended the dialogue to one more group of Peace Circles that we facilitated in October.

*Report by Cleo Mohlaodi and Gladys Mabe*

## ***Clean Up at Olivienhoutbosch***

The Trust Building Programme teamed up with Cetric Mphofela of the Cetric Foundation based in Diepsloot, a community north of Johannesburg, recently and took part in a clean up in an area of Olivienhoutbosch. There were 10 participants and 54 bags were filled with litter within a few hours. The local municipality refuse truck was due to pick it up the bags two days later. A great sense of camaraderie and building of community and partnerships!



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