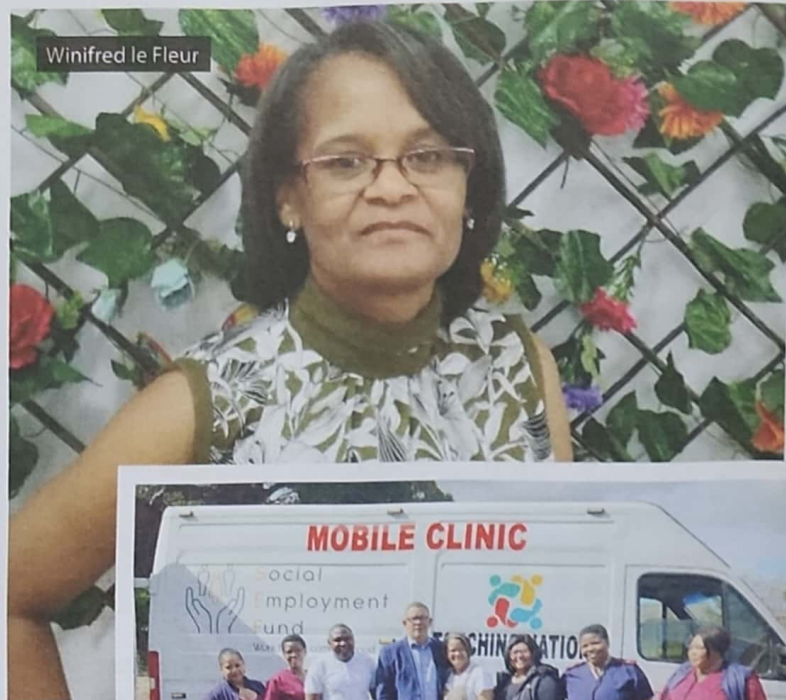


Mobile clinics & miracles: Transforming the Cape Flats

—by Sophia Roman



The Cape Flats is often marked by challenges and dangers that affect the lives of its residents. Amidst these difficulties, Winifred le Fleur, COO of Touching Nations, stands as a beacon of hope and change. In this interview, she opens up about her vision for the less privileged and the remarkable journey of Touching Nations, a medical outreach initiative dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those in need.

Q. So Winnie, tell us about your dream for the less privileged. How did it all start?

I started Touching Nations in 2006, focusing primarily on HIV/TB screening and testing. Despite limited resources, we began working in the Tygerberg and Northern sub-structures, deploying lay counsellors to conduct screenings. Our non-medical clinic was also taking services to different areas in these two sub-districts. We didn't have a mobile clinic at that time – we had to make do with what we had, which was my car, a Honda Jazz, in which we fitted the counsellors and equipment. We went out to reach those who could not be reached. Going into informal settlements that had no health services, right to the patients' doorsteps, was never a challenge. In my heart, however, I wished we had our own mobile clinic; then we could reach so many more.

"Through Touching Nations, we can transform communities for the glory of God."

Q. How did you manage to do this?

I would load my car full with equipment – a gazebo, cooler bags for the test kits, a table, and chairs – and do the first drop off at our makeshift clinic site. Then I would go back to fetch the staff and buy incentives for the community. The same car was used to go early in the morning to collect bread and porridge to prevent pa-

tients from taking medicine on empty stomachs. The dream was always there for Touching Nations to have its own mobile clinic one day.

In May 2023, I contacted Flexi Health – a health infrastructure supplier, providing top-quality medical equipment and supplies – to find out if they could assist us with a mobile clinic. It seemed so impossible, but I kept my dream close to my heart, only between me and God. As an NPO, we applied for social employment funding and we were successful. Through this blessed opportunity, Touching Nations was able to create employment for 1111 people. God opened doors for us on 24 October 2023 – my dream became a reality when the mobile clinic arrived at our premises.

Q. You deeply believe in transforming communities?

I have always believed that through Touching Nations, we can transform communities for the glory of God, and with the mobile clinic we will now be able to do it. In order to obtain anything in life you need to be able to take risks and take steps of faith, similar to Peter who had to walk on water in order to believe. Everything that Touching Nations has achieved to date is only through the grace of God.

As we approach the Christmas season, Winifred's story serves as a reminder of the power of dreams, determination, and community service. May her journey inspire us all to give generously and receive joyfully in the season of glad tidings. ■

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Sophia and her husband, Theo, pastor the West Reach AOG Church in Mitchell's Plain.