

Youth for Christ KZN /L'Abri – Official Report

Dear friends and Associates,

Youth for Christ KZN has recently made the very difficult decision to close L'Abri for a short season while we seek God for fresh vision and direction regarding this incredible asset. There have been numerous assumptions and reports about the temporary closure of L'Abri in recent months, some of which we believe may be incorrect or untrue.

L'Abri is an asset that requires sound leadership, well trained service staff, resources as well as an effective and efficient ministry plan. During the last 10 years there have been many forums, up-dates and discussions regarding L'Abri's development, maintenance and leadership. My role as Provincial Director has in the past two years put me in a position where I have now become directly involved in the decision making process of L'Abri.

For the present YFC leadership to make such a drastic decision will no doubt lead you to believe that L'Abri is in a crisis situation and to a certain extent it is.

We have had many reports from clients using the facility over the last few years suggesting that our basic service levels have not been met. Furthermore, during the past 6 years, L'Abri has had only one financial year not ending in the red. This necessarily is reason for concern. Due to the difficulty of securing funding for capital development and the current economic climate, we need to find ways for L'Abri to be self sufficient.

There needs to be a balance of ministry opportunities and financially viable business to create a sustainable structure at L'Abri. Although YFC has managed to cover the deficits over the past 6 years, we cannot continue to do so. The first 3 months of this year proved to be particularly financially draining with very few viable opportunities to raise the much needed revenue to sustain the operation. As a leadership we have projected that the current future bookings will not improve the financial situation but continue the deficit cycle.

Financially, L'Abri ended up with a small deficit at the end of last year and Youth for Christ was able to cover that deficit. During the past 3 months of 2009, L'Abri's bookings have not picked up and as at the end of March, L'Abri has made a loss that does not allow Youth for Christ to keep it open. Having researched why bookings are low and some of the possible reasons for financial loss, we have found the following, L'Abri has some urgent developmental and maintenance needs that will require funding. Without serious attention and intervention, L'Abri will create a poor impression for YFC/KZN and continue to have poor customer satisfaction. Some of these are as follows:

- While L'Abri has the capacity to service three groups, there is only one meeting room, therefore restricting capacity to one group. We do understand in the past L'Abri's ministry model was to work with small group development but we do need to cater for the changing need of clients.
- L'Abri's capacity for numbers is limited to 100 and many group enquiries are for larger groups. We cannot at this point in time cater for bigger numbers and we are consistently turning away clients with bigger numbers.
- Certain structures are no longer safe due to poor construction/maintenance and need attention before the safety of our clients can be guaranteed.

- There is a theft problem that impacts our food costs very negatively and our clients as well. This obviously is an extra expense and takes away from the profits made on our catering margin.

I have listed down a few of these to give you a picture of some of the challenges at L'Abri. Should we continue without addressing these and other challenges, we put ourselves in a position of poor leadership and stewardship of a beautiful resource that God has entrusted to us. YFC is not in a position to sustain any project over a long period of time without guaranteed funding. Yet, L'Abri is a project that could and should be sustaining itself financially.

So what does the future look like:

Firstly and most important of all, please understand that L'Abri is not closing down indefinitely. This is more of a 'winter shut down' to allow the YFC leadership to take stock and do proper intensive strategic thinking and planning to ensure that L'Abri is managed to it's full potential and capacity.

By the end of August, the leadership of YFC/KZN commits to have a long term strategy and business plan in place for L'Abri which will include a marketing strategy. In the short term, we intend commencing with renovations, proportionate to available funding. The leadership of YFC KZN endeavours to secure funding in order to ensure that L'Abri once reopened provides a service to clients that is not only exceptional through committed Christian staff but also a site impeccable in all standards, while still maintaining the outdoor rustic experience.

Having read this letter, should you have any concerns, questions or comments please feel free to give me a call or write me an e-mail. I would love to hear from you and would sincerely value your support through prayer in this time.

Yours in Christ,



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