

Story sheet 1 – Passionate

Wiseman Shabalala (second from right) is 30 but has spent ten years in prison. After being released, he joined KCAP's Acting against Crime group, using drama to tell young people that crime doesn't pay. Now the veteran of the group, he's encouraging more young men, like **Thempinkosi** (second from left), to join up. 'KwaMashu is changing step by step,' says Wiseman, 'We're the ones who are making it better'

KCAP's work and KwaMashu



South Africa's townships are a different world to the modern cities nearby. Here the country's poorest citizens are crammed into sprawling ghettos with tumbledown housing, few jobs and high crime.

Just 20 kilometres from the thriving city of Durban, KwaMashu is home to half a million poor black South Africans. With 80 per cent unemployment, high HIV rates and violent crime, many young people here have little to hope for.

In this brutal context of poverty and violence, KCAP provides dance, drama, music and design classes. The centre brings meaning and hope to

the lives of hundreds of young people, and a very real opportunity to find work in the arts sector. The performances are both spectacular and relevant, often dealing with gritty issues such as crime, HIV and life in prison.

KCAP's arts centre is called Ekhaya, meaning 'home' in Zulu. The centre acts as a vital focal point for the community, both during class time – when young people choose to come here instead of hanging around in the streets – and during performances, when the local audience roars in appreciation as they recognise friends and neighbours. The police say that the crime rate has plummeted since Ekhaya opened its doors.

KCAP offers a dynamic and uplifting vision of the future. It targets young people who would otherwise be left on the margins of society, and gives them the opportunity to be centre-stage. KCAP is a secular organisation, founded in 1993. Christian Aid has been supporting them since 1999.

Wiseman says, 'If you do crime you end up in prison or dead. We're using our own experiences, we know what goes on in there. We are in poverty here but poverty is no reason to do crime. You can use talent and creativity instead. I believe God created each person with a purpose.'

Sermon notes

Matthew 5:1-12

(or your own choice – see below)

Choose a Bible passage that you always find inspiring, and explain why you are so passionate about it. Alternatively, read part of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5, which many people find particularly challenging and inspiring.

Wherever Jesus went, he told stories that drew the crowds in. We don't know his style, his delivery technique or the quality of his voice, but we do know that many people gathered to listen. He told them controversial things, sometimes things that they wouldn't have wanted to hear. He told things that got him into trouble – with the rich, with the powerful, with the occupying forces. He addressed the issues that mattered to the people around him.

In South Africa, the drama groups from Kwa Mashu Community Advancement Projects (KCAP) do similar things, speaking out on the most important issues for their communities. Like Jesus, they use storytelling to get their message across. Like Jesus, they challenge the way things have been.

What is your church passionate about? What are the things your church should be speaking out about? What are the important local issues in your community? What global issues should we be telling people about – our responsibility to people in places like South Africa? Fair trade? Climate change? What ways could your church use to engage the people around you, to listen to what you want to say?

Prayers

- Give thanks for drama, dance, music and song.
- Give thanks for the work of KCAP and the passion of people like Wiseman.
- Ask God to make us passionate in the things we do, just as Wiseman and the others in his group are passionate.

Lord –
When I am afraid to speak
because I feel ignorant,
Lord, let me find my voice.
When I fear to trust others
because they are different,
or because they have power,
Lord, give me courage.
When I feel manipulated,
and I do not know how to argue my case,
Lord, help me to choose well.
Amen

(Janet Morley, Christian Aid)

- Prayer action – you could write your prayers on paper hearts and place them in your South African bowl as a symbol of giving your heart and your passion to God.

Fundraising ideas

- Why not hold a talent show and charge for admission. You could even turn it into a competition, asking for votes after each act. (For example, say one vote costs 10p and people can vote as many times as they like for as many acts as they like – eg, if they love one act, they may choose to give it 10 votes, ie £1. Give a prize to the act with the most votes.)
- You could hold a Songs of Praise evening with retiring collection. You could also ask people to nominate their favourite hymns and charge £5 for every request that gets sung in the evening.

Children's church

- Summer children's groups theme: why not celebrate African culture during the summer with Sunday school sessions on drama, dance, art, etc. Then use what they have created in a celebration service in September.
- The young people involved in KCAP are changing their world. Ask the children to complete the statement: 'If I could change the world, I would change...' and ask them to draw or write this on an outline of a globe. Put these up as a display in the church (and the children could then even challenge the rest of the church to answer the same question!)
- The young people in KCAP perform plays about the things that matter in their community. Ask the children to make up a play about a social issue in your area, for example under-age drinking, bullying or young people being bored and getting into trouble. Invite them to perform it in church. Is there somewhere else they could perform it where more people would see it?

£75 could fund one person's place on a two-day residential workshop for farm dwellers to learn about their land and housing rights

£190 could fund the transport costs for an AFRA fieldworker to visit a rural community to help people with the paperwork for their land claims