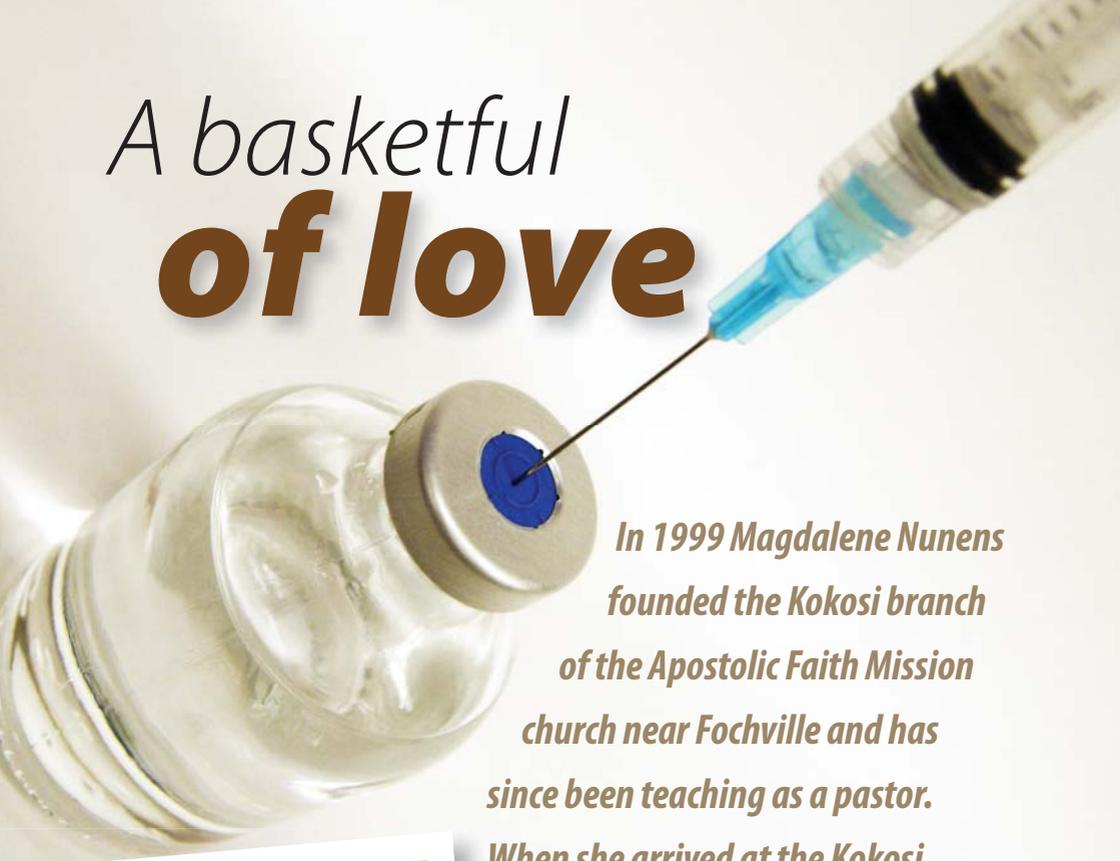


A basketful **of love**



In 1999 Magdalene Nunens founded the Kokosi branch of the Apostolic Faith Mission church near Fochville and has since been teaching as a pastor. When she arrived at the Kokosi informal settlement she noticed the extreme poverty of the community. Many people didn't have food or basic things like soap. She started what she calls, a weekly "basket" - an initiative where she and people from the community would donate food and toiletries to the poor.

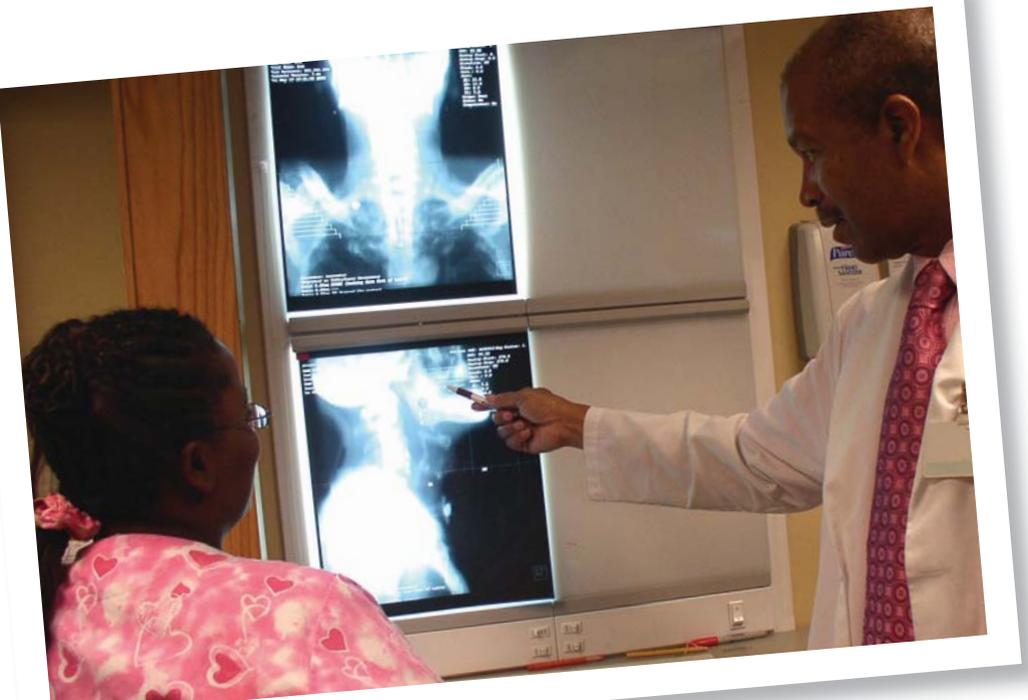




"It scared me that people would arrive at church, not having eaten in three days. Small children would come to me and tell me of a granny who wasn't receiving a pension and that they had to take the responsibility of finding food. It touched me deeply." The initiative evolved into a soup kitchen at church, feeding the hungry every Sunday morning.

After a good friend of Magdalene's was diagnosed with HIV/Aids she took her in and took care of her. This was the first encounter Magdalene had with the virus. Since then she has witnessed it's merciless destroying of lives many times over.

"I noticed how a small girl of 7-years old would come to church every Sunday





The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) Women's Health campaign encourages all women to invest in their health by learning how to detect women's cancers early, including cervical cancer which affects one in 35 women each year. Visit www.cansa.org.za or call CANSA toll-free 0800 22 66 22 for more info

morning, carrying a baby with her. She would feed the baby at the soup kitchen before attending the service. When I asked her why the baby wasn't with its mother, she replied that the mother was very ill and couldn't look after it." This would happen often – children telling Magdalene their story and Magdalene visiting their homes to find it without anything except the stench of sickness and the tell-tale signs of a dysfunctional child-headed household.

When Magdalene had depleted most of her own funds and nearly lost her house, she realised she had to make another plan if the soup kitchen was to keep running. "We then started a vegetable garden!" The garden not only allowed them to save money on food but also contributed to the fight against Magdalene's new enemy: cancer.

"October last year, I started experiencing pain in my leg, but I was so busy with work that I didn't pay any attention to it. My daughter urged me to go to hospital – it was cervical cancer." Magdalene, who has turned her garage into a hospice, had many people die under her roof and in her

arms – for her to be the one diagnosed with a life-threatening disease was unimaginable.

"There's a notion in the black community that cancer is a white person's disease. I found out that it isn't. Radiation burned and I was very ill, but I thank God because by His grace I have survived."

Magdalene Nunens' great spirit has touched a whole community. The people in Kokosi receive regular visits from doctors and nurses who educate them on HIV/Aids and the soup kitchen has expanded, feeding children before and after school in addition to Sunday mornings. Magdalene manages the beautiful Rudo home-based care centre where patients engage with support groups and receive treatment and she bought two small sewing machines so women and children can work.

"People complain that healthy food is expensive, but I say no, all you need is one small patch of garden. You also need to go for check-ups and shouldn't ignore symptoms. Trust the Lord – cancer can be beaten!"