

Pretoria Bar

Contributed by **Megan Moodley**

THE SECOND PRETORIA FAMILY LAW CONFERENCE

by **Jolanda Pretorius**

On 16 May 2025, the Pretoria legal community gathered for the second Pretoria Family Law Conference, an event brimming with expertise, collaboration, and a shared commitment to the advancement of family law practice. Judge Brenda Neukircher, former member of the Pretoria Bar and chairperson of the Family Court Committee, set the tone with a warm and spirited opening address. Our own Piet van Niekerk SC took to the podium as one of the distinguished presenters.

The conference brought together a vibrant cross-section of the profession: advocates, attorneys, social workers, academics, representatives from NGOs, the Centre for Child Law, the Office of the Family Advocate, and other dedicated stakeholders. United by a passion for protecting and promoting family rights, delegates engaged with an inspiring range of topics – from the role of trusts in divorces and the interplay between customary marriages and life insurance, to intersectoral protocols for high-conflict matters, the nexus between conveyancing and family law, shortcomings in statutory rape provisions and the professional nuances of forensic social work. The evolving impact of social media and cyber-related pitfalls was also keenly explored.

It was a day that not only enriched our legal knowledge but also strengthened the networks that make the practice of family law a dynamic and deeply human pursuit.



Piet van Niekerk SC



Karin Fitzroy



Bernette Bergenthuijn



Marc Haskins SC, Piet van Niekerk SC and Sybrandt Stadler.

GCB TEACHER TRAINER & ADVANCED TRAINER COURSES

by Megan Moodley

"If you are irritated by every rub, how will you be polished?" – Rumi

Over the 29 September – 2 October 2025 recess, members of the constituent bars of the GCB converged at the Glenburn Lodge in Muldersdrift for what promised (and delivered) to be an intense and instructive week of training.

Over the four days and under the stewardship of Benny Makola SC (national convenor of advocacy training), two courses ran concurrently, namely the Teacher Trainer course directed by Thabang Mathopo, and the Advanced Teacher Trainer course directed by Etienne Botha SC.

The Teacher Trainer course was aimed at training the next cohort of trainers who, upon completion of the course, will be integrated into the training of pupils at their respective bars, whilst the Advanced Teacher Trainer course aimed at elevating the skills of trainers who have been training for at least five years.

The faculty of trainers comprised both local and international trainers with colleagues from afar abroad as Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Scotland and England, making the



journey to impart their wealth of knowledge and experience with the trainees.

The trainees were warned that they would be stretched and bent over the course of the week. And as iron is forged, so were we, but what we weren't warned about were the bonds of friendship that sparked between colleagues, who stood side-by-side, encouraged each other and praised every improvement and performance over the course of the week; and who at the end of a long and taxing day shared drinks and laughter over their respective bloopers.

We at the Bar are all familiar with "the Method", but this week of training gave me a newfound appreciation for what it takes to be a trained trainer and what a profound impact the proper deployment of the Method can and should have on pupils who arrive at the Bar with the expectation of receiving training of the highest standards.

I was among the members fortunate enough to be invited to be trained as a Teacher Trainer, and I look forward to returning to my bar and serving as a trainer to future advocates, upholding the tradition of advocacy excellence within the Bar.





RAISING THE BAR: MEMBERS OF THE PRETORIA SOCIETY OF ADVOCATES JUDGE STUDENT MOOTS

by Jolanda Pretorius

Moot court competitions remain an invaluable platform for law students to sharpen their advocacy, legal research and writing skills. By simulating the demands of real-life litigation, moots not only provide a rigorous academic exercise but also inspire students to pursue careers at the Bar. Beyond technical skill, mooting fosters resilience, confidence and an appreciation for professional ethics, while also offering opportunities for mentorship by practising advocates. Members of the Pretoria Society of Advocates continue to recognise the importance and potential of moot court competitions, dedicating their time and expertise to support these initiatives.

The 14th Annual Child Law Moot Court Competition, organised and hosted by the Centre for Child Law at the University of Pretoria, was held on 19–20 September 2025. The theme for this year’s moot court competition centred on the care and protection of children,

with a particular focus on the legality of mechanisms designed for the safe relinquishment of infants, commonly known as “Baby Saver Boxes”, under the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 and relevant principles of international law. Colleagues from the Pretoria Society of Advocates served as judges during the quarter-finals, semi-finals, and finals. Each brought a distinct perspective to the bench, engaging rigorously with the legal issues while encouraging participants to refine their advocacy. Importantly, the finals provided more than a forum for adjudication: they became a moment of meaningful mentorship, with judges taking the time to guide and inspire the students in their journeys towards practice.

Hot on the heels of the Child Law Moot, Mentors & Moot, in association with the Pretoria Attorneys Association, hosted their inaugural moot court finals on 28 September 2025. Advocates from the Pretoria Society of Advocates were again present on the bench, judging both

the junior and senior league finals. Each group of students argued their own set of facts, requiring adaptability and precision in their submissions. The judging process extended beyond the application of substantive law to highlight procedural aspects critical to litigants in formal court settings. The judges’ interventions provided both practical guidance and valuable mentorship, reinforcing the standards expected of future practitioners.

Mooting enables law students to enhance their advocacy, research, and drafting skills, while offering a genuine taste of litigation practice. It is a vital element of legal education and an important vehicle through which experienced practitioners can mentor the next generation. Members of the Pretoria Society of Advocates are proud to have contributed to these competitions and their commitment stands as a testament to the profession’s investment in fostering excellence among future legal practitioners.





CELEBRATING WOMEN IN LAW AND AT THE BAR

by Ruth Orr

In celebration of Women's Month, the Pretoria Society of Advocates hosted a Women's Day Bubbles and Brunch at the lovely Groenkloof Chambers. The event was well attended, not only by current members of the Pretoria Bar, but also by those who once walked our corridors before ascending to the bench. As ladies sat sipping sparkling wine, everything from the art of advocacy to love, life and the law was discussed.

In her welcome address, the chairperson of the Pretoria Bar, Liezl Haupt SC, welcomed guests and colleagues, calling on women to support one another and to draw inspiration from the remarkable achievements of senior colleagues, who have triumphed despite past and present challenges in the profession. Among the distinguished guests were former members of the Pretoria Bar, now serving on the bench, Judge Tolmay, Judge Neukircher, Judge Kooverjie, Judge Hassim, and Judge Retief – a line-up as inspiring as it was formidable.

Haupt SC also took the opportunity to commemorate Miss Linda van Rynenveld, who had worked for the Pretoria Society of Advocates for almost 35 years and was now taking a well-deserved retirement. Linda started her journey with the Pretoria Bar as a receptionist, eventually becoming a librarian. Her dedication and her skills in



Linda van Rynenveld



Chairperson Liezl Haupt SC

finding elusive precedents will be missed. In her time, she would have seen the Pretoria Society of Advocates grow both in numbers and in diversity.

That diversity is reflected through the growing number of female advocates in practice. When Judge Tolmay first joined the Bar in 1986, she became one of only four female members. Today, the Pretoria Society of Advocates boasts 189 female juniors and 15 female silks. The story of women at the Bar has changed since those days. However, those ladies were able to hold to the

authentic versions of themselves by not failing or losing their femininity, support of other women and bolstering their female juniors. As a parting pearl of wisdom from those who ascended to the bench, the ladies in attendance were reminded that the gift of the pen is itself insufficient; members must also master the gift of the gab. A valuable tip, regardless of one's gender.



LIVE WIRES IN OLD HANDS

by George S. Ponoyakgosi Modisa

It was a cold and cloudy morning when the “Old Hands” held the “Live Wires”; the electricity of anticipation, hope and wisdom were palpable in the air. This is how one could describe the “Senior & Junior Members Breakfast Meet & Greet”, hosted by the Pretoria Society of Advocates transformation committee, held on the Morning of 25 July 2025 at the Club Advocates’ Chambers.

This auspicious event brought together seasoned silks (“Old Hands”) and rising juniors (“Live Wires”) for a morning of connection and shared wisdom over coffee and a hearty breakfast. Advocates exchanged insights, war stories and practical advice in an atmosphere of camaraderie. Many prominent silks were among those who sacrificed their valuable time that morning to attend this event.



Lisha Harilal, convener of the wellness committee, opened with remarks of how tough things were during her first year of practice. “Remember you do not know much. As such, take your time, do your research, ask for help, knock on the doors of seniors, take care of your mental health, manage your time effectively and ask for help over and over again” she said; I obviously paraphrased her words. She gave a full, great speech and her words reminded me of a quote by the late Dr Chris Barnard who said: “Take your time, do a few things but do them well.” Lisha Harilal would have added, and knock on the doors of those who came before you and ask for help.

We can all agree that the Bar thrives when experience guides ambition and when new members are assisted/guided to succeed.

Dikeledi Chabedi SC, of the transformation committee, reassured anxious junior advocates, reminding them that all senior advocates started where they are now. She emphasised that success requires persistence, that there are no lightning bolt signals that you have made it and no one announces your arrival. Over time, she said, they will realise that they need less guidance and will worry less about finances, offering a flame of hope to those who have just begun running their practices.





Lisha Harilal addressing attendees.



Dikeledi Chabedi SC addressing attendees.



As I walked through the crowd after the speeches, I eavesdropped on my colleagues asking pressing questions of the silks, such as how to handle tough judges, building a stable practice, making new connections, and balancing ethics with client demands; all the while the silks offered candid and often humorous counsel. Beyond formal talks, the event sparked real connections – young advocates found mentors, some were immediately roped in on matters of great interest to them, seniors gained fresh inspiration, and the Pretoria Bar’s collegial spirit shone.

With hopes of similar follow-up sessions, this breakfast reaffirmed that the future of the profession lies in transformative collaboration. As one attendee noted: “The best advocacy lessons aren’t just in textbooks, they are shared over coffee and laughter and we hope that we will see sessions such as these occurring more frequently”. [A](#)