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December 2024

The blessings of Christmas, Hanukkah and the Festive Season to all our readers

**A unique shared Meal helps reconcile
Graduation at the Dalton creche
A new bookshop for Street Lit
Looking back over our Anniversary year**



Youngsters ready for life



Star bookseller at the Book Fair



10 years in our building

10TH ANNUAL MEAL OF RECONCILIATION

It was in December 2014 that we moved into the newly finished Denis Hurley Centre. So this year's Meal of Reconciliation was a great opportunity to mark 10 years by bringing together all the different members of the DHC family: staff, volunteers, donors, NGO partners, faith leaders, media, members of the general public and – most importantly homeless people and refugees.

Rudy Cupido, from St Michael's Anglican church Umhlanga shares his reflections on the event:

“As we arrived, I felt a mix of anxiety, uncertainty, and hope, stepping into an unfamiliar experience with no idea what to expect. Outside, our guests were waiting patiently to be called in which stirred a sense of responsibility in me—an eagerness to make the day

meaningful and welcoming for everyone.

"When the guests began entering the halls, we all shared a sense of uncertainty. There was hesitation in their steps, mirrored by our own as we navigated this experience together. We guided everyone to their seats with kindness, doing our best to ease the initial tension and make the space feel inviting.

"Once seated, we began talking with the guests at our tables, sharing stories and asking questions about their families, lives, and experiences. Conversations started slowly, with moments of silence that we allowed to settle naturally, creating an atmosphere of acceptance.

"While waiting for the meal, we introduced a card-making activity to encourage creativity and connection. Some of our guests were hesitant, unsure of what to write or how to begin, while others embraced the opportunity with enthusiasm. To reassure them, we encouraged creativity without judgment, focusing on the joy of the process. Together, we wrote cards for loved ones, for ourselves, or simply for the moment.

"When the meal was served, the room lit up with joy. Plates filled with delicious food brought smiles to faces, and the realization that seconds were available added to the excitement. Sharing the meal together created a sense of unity and warmth, breaking down barriers and allowing genuine conversations to flourish.

"As the day progressed, we noticed more openness in our guests, and the atmosphere grew lighter. The shared experience of connection, kindness, and care was palpable. Cleaning up afterward, we found many of the cards left behind. Reading their heartfelt messages—some bold, others simple—was both moving and bittersweet, a reminder of the hopes and dreams we all carry.

"This Meal of Reconciliation was a powerful experience. It reminded us that kindness and shared humanity can bridge even the widest gaps. As we came together that day, we hoped our guests left feeling seen, valued, and deserving of their place in the world. For me, it was a profound lesson in connection and the beauty of simply being present for one another."

Photo (Shelley Kjonstad): As usual, the meal served was breyani donated by four faith groups. Left to right: Devesh Arulappan (on behalf of the Blessed Liberat Catholic Parish in Newlands West), Aslam Mayet (the Muslim breyani was a personal donation by AV Mohamed), Evelyn Cohen (on behalf of the Union of Jewish Women), and Kemera Moody (the Hindu breyani was donated by Food for Life).



END OF YEAR AT THE DALTON CRECHE

Many of our projects are based on trying to deliver at scale – over 150,000 meals will have been served this year; each month we see over 2,000 patients in our clinic. At the same time,

sometimes the need is on a smaller scale and must be handled with care and sensitivity.

One such example is our creche by the Dalton Beer Hall where we also run a satellite of our clinic. In one form or another this project has been going for 8 years – it is un-nerving to think that the first children whom we helped prepare to enter primary school are now completing their first year of high school! Each year we have around 15 children enrolled for a full five-day-a-week programme to prepare them for formal school and start them on the journey of learning.

The mothers (there are rarely fathers present) are keen that their children get a good start but do not have the resources to provide it. The two years of free pre-schooling that we offer is invaluable to ensure that the children do not start with an even greater disadvantage.

This year we have had the huge blessing of a teacher donated by the International Montessori Association (AMI). Nombulelo Bambayi is preparing to teach at a new school that will be built in the Davenport area; in the meantime, Prof Alain Tschudin has graciously enabled her to teach in our little pre-school. She is assisted by Zovuyo Ncayiyana, a member of the local community who really understands the families.

The end of the school year was marked by a graduation ceremony. Five of the children are moving on to start at primary school; ten more will be coming back to us in the new year to be joined by new recruits. The children performed poems and dances and showed how happy they are with their new teacher. Parents came in numbers to attend and cheer on their children, together with members of the local community and also AMI staff to support Nombulelo. A photographer took class photos, individual photos and child-and-parents photos: it was such an amazing moment. Long-time creche supporter Sandy Colia had donated individually chosen presents for each child and Ian Campbell-Gillies and the Umbilo Business Association ensured that the children had a KFC meal which they really enjoyed.

We are especially grateful to Dutch NGO Izingane Happy Foundation who have just celebrated their own 10th anniversary and have been supporting our Dalton creche and a number of other child-based projects in the Durban area.



STREET LIT BOOKS END THE YEAR ON A HIGH!

The Street Lit book team have had an astonishing, busy and affirming year. To cap it all, a few days before Christmas, our friends at Windermere Centre offered us a wonderful shop until the end of January. It is light and airy and in a prime location. The team, brilliantly supported by Mette Bunyan, set up shop in just a few hours. Three vendors will rotate turns in staffing the shop which has some great holiday reads and gift books – perfect for this time of year.

In fact, Windermere Centre has two NGOs selling affordable books. At set times throughout the year, Anchor of Hope (whose focus is on youth literacy and libraries) sell

their books during the week; we take over their space for the weekend. They have also been really generous in donating their surplus books to us. Our vendors had an info sharing session with their team so we could both understand more about each other's projects and support each other better going forward.

We have also been given a pop-up upstairs at Glenwood Village Mall. This time we are trying something new – only selling CDS and DVDs. Comfort Ngubane is there Monday to Saturday.

We also had a strong presence at the Eduvos Durban International Book Fair. One Street Lit vendor was selling books throughout the festival, and we had three time slots to talk about the Denis Hurley Centre and our projects. Book vendor Eric Badise was in conversation with Illa Thompson about how books have changed his life. Eric presents a brilliant, heart-felt testimony. Recently he has spoken at the National Homeless Conversation; at a Leadership Forum; at a conference in Cape Town for educators working in the various Holocaust and Genocide centres around the country; and at the Durban Union of Jewish Women.

Also talking at the fair was poet Kemera Moodly sharing with Illa Thompson about how to encourage young people to read and write poetry. All of the proceeds from sales of Moodly's books go to the DHC. And Raymond was in conversation with Rev Andrew Warmback about his book on Paddy Kearney (which has now almost sold out its first print run).

In other vendor news: inspired by Shelley Mclean Downham, Donel Tanbeni has been making little paper angels from discarded books then sold at the Elizabeth Sneddon theatre. We are also super proud of vendor Kagiso Pihlela (pictured at the top) who was selected to be a Matric marking assistant in the Limpopo province. Kagiso has recently completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Education with Mancosa and next year we will be helping him to find a position as a junior teacher in accountancy and business studies.

And we are delighted that we are just about finished sorting, cleaning and managing the awesome donation of 20,000 books from Mandela month. Many of them have of course been sold already. So come January, we will once more be looking for more quality books to be donated to our project!

Photo: Booksellers Mongezi Mtolo (left) and China Shabalala cannot believe their luck as they move into their pop-up store in Windermere Centre.



LOOKING BACK ON THE YEAR AND LOOKING FORWARDS

The end-of-year newsletter is a chance to take stock. It seems a long time since the statue of Archbishop Hurley was unveiled in our new building in Dec 2014 (see *photo at the top*).

We marked 2024 as an anniversary year – not just 10 years of being in our building, but also 20 years since the death of Archbishop Hurley (in Feb 2004) and 30 years since the dawn of democracy in South Africa (in April 1994). We have had social, cultural and inter-religious events; a book launch and a massive book drive; a national conference; and lectures in Durban, other parts of SA and even in the UK. Meantime, we have carried on with all our usual healthcare and welfare activities as well as the extra opportunity to empower people in connection with national elections.

None of this would be possible without the amazing support that we get from our team members – not just those who are paid but all those who are unpaid and come to us as individual volunteers, interns, and groups from schools, universities, corporates, churches, mosques, synagogues and temples. The interfaith vision of both Archbishop Hurley and Paddy Kearney means that we continue to benefit from support from across the diverse religious communities of Durban, and often from the ones you might least expect. Meantime, in the background, we rely on the steady work of our (unpaid) Trustees to ensure good governance and keeping us true to our vision.

Thanks to people generously donating food and time, and also the advantage of working in partnership, we are able to keep our costs low. In fact, our spend for everything we delivered in 2024 is likely to come in at only a little more than R6 million (\$325,000 or £260,000). We had hoped that the Anniversary Year would boost our fundraising but in fact we almost did not raise enough within 2024 to cover our costs – thankfully a last-minute fundraising drive in the UK saw us over the line.

However, we are conscious that there has been a decline in the funds raised in Durban in recent years and we have reason to be concerned. Inflation alone means that, what cost us R100 when we opened, would now cost us R162. We know that Durban has suffered particularly from financial setbacks – we see it in the lives of the people we serve every day. We are confident nevertheless that individuals, families, business and faith communities in Durban will dig deeper to ensure that the DHC continues its life-changing work. Given the underlying wealth of Durban, we should as a city be able to support several Denis Hurley Centres!

A fuller feedback on our financial situation will take place at our annual Stakeholders Meeting scheduled for Saturday 8 February as part of our annual Hurley Weekend. If you will be in Durban please make a note to join us for that and also for a Jazz Fundraising Afternoon on Sunday 2 March.

Sometimes it takes someone from outside to remind us who we are. The US Consul General based in Durban, Josie Ratcliffe, has visited us a few times and makes sure that other US visitors come and see the DHC as an example of what makes Durban special. She commented: “I can’t express how grateful I am for the opportunity to make new friends at DHC’s Meal of Reconciliation this year. So much love and genuine appreciation for each other – it was a perfect day. Surely, there is no better expression-in-action of how this day is meant to be spent. Thank you so much for including me!”

We look forward to including all of you in our work next year – as volunteers, donors and partners. And thank you to all of you who have supported us in 2024. May the Christmas season be a time of peace and joy for all – and most especially for those who are struggling on the streets of Durban.

Photo (Shelley Kjonstad): US Consul General Josie Ratcliffe enjoying a laugh with some of the participants at this year’s Meal of Reconciliation.



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