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**DENIS  
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**UPDATE**

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**April 2022**

*As we mark Labour Day, we wish many blessings for all workers and all those who would love to work but do not have the chance.*

**Aftermath of the Durban Floods**  
**Sharing Ramadan with our neighbours**  
**An invitation to honour an un-sung hero**  
**Support the Napier Centre's Unity Walk**



**Prayers in Paddy Kearney Way**



**Gift to DHC of striking artworks**



**Where is Fr Stephen Tully heading?**

**AFTERMATH OF THE WORST FLOODS IN 100 YEARS**

The eyes of the world were again on Durban in recent weeks as we faced catastrophic floods. The official death toll is 435, with 55 people still reported missing. Thousands of people lost their homes – from the poorest to the richest areas – and hundreds of thousands were without power and/or running water for days if not weeks.

In the middle of this chaos, the Denis Hurley Centre was mercifully unharmed. Moreover, the communities we serve – who are often those most affected by catastrophe, whether pandemic, riots or just the day-to-day failures of Government services – were also remarkably unaffected which was a great

relief. Most of the damage has been in suburbs outside the CBD.

But we were not un-touched personally. Xolani, one of our cleaners lost his house and all his belongings; other staff members saw their neighbours badly affected and struggled to get to work. The aunt of Paul Radebe, our caretaker, was tragically killed when her house collapsed; and we heard that 27-year-old Nqobile (who had been a social work intern with us) was washed away to her death with her husband. There is barely a family in Durban that has not been scarred by the floods and we pray for them all.

Our main response has been to carry on doing what we do best: providing healthcare to those who cannot access it, and being ready to feed the hundreds who turn up at our door, five days a week. We are grateful for the extra donations of food we received, especially from Domino, Boxer Superstores and Iqraa Trust. We have been able to make a cash donation to a small community organisation we know well who have been working on the front line.

Some of the homeless wanted to make their own contribution to the mass clear-up effort. They were the group that should by now be being paid to work for the Municipality, except that its much trumpeted emergency employment programme has still failed to start. We instead enabled them to work on clearing litter and debris. Over the course of five days, different teams of about a dozen homeless men and women filled almost 400 black bags with plastic and glass that had been washed up across the beaches. That is a few tonnes of human litter that will not be heading back into the ocean! It was great to see the look of pride on their faces having been able to spend time in productive work and also make a contribution to cleaning our city.

Bizarrely, while they were clearing up, and while people are generously donating blankets to help those affected by the floods, Metro Police officers 'under orders from the Municipality' were going around binning the blankets that homeless people had left out to dry on the beach claiming that they too were 'clearing up'!

We have 30 men and women trained and ready for work who would prefer not to wait until the Municipal programme gets into gear; so if you are a Durban employer and would like to offer a 'hand up' to one of our team, [contact Stuart](#).



## **FASTING THROUGH THE FLOODS**

One of the most significant responders to the floods has been [Gift of the Givers](#) and we recommend them to anyone who wishes to donate to help people affected. It is especially moving to realise that their mostly Muslim workers and volunteers were observing the Ramadan fast while working tirelessly to rescue people and to provide emergency support. Their holy month ends this weekend and we wish 'Eid Mubarak' to all our Muslim friends and neighbours.

As has become our tradition, in the last week of Ramadan we joined with Muslim organisations to host an inter-faith iftaar. We were graced with the presence of Dr AV Mahomed from the Jumma Masjid, one of our Patrons, and also staff from IPCI who host tours of the mosque for visiting groups. Sifiso Duma spoke about how the floods had influenced this year's Ramadan. "Islam means submission to the will of God and natural disasters like this help us focus on how reliant we are on God's mercy. Not one single drop of rain falls, but God has ordained it. Fasting also reminds us of those in need and the many opportunities we have to help our sisters and brothers."

Non-Muslims had been invited to spend that day in fasting (from 5am) to show their solidarity, and also to feel something of what the fast entails. At 5.30pm we gathered outside in Paddy Lane (on a relatively cold evening) and, as we heard the call to prayer from the muezzin next door, we each enjoyed dates, the traditional way of breaking the fast. Mats were unrolled outside for the prayers and then a small but lively group of Muslims and Hindus, Catholics and Protestants joined to share some delicious food and brightly coloured drinks.

Uniquely this year Ramadan coincided with Holy Week and Passover, as well as Tamil New Year, and so it was a chance for all of us to reflect on how we cope in difficult situations. Bishop Rubin Phillip spoke on this theme at the annual Diakonia Good Friday Service and Archbishop Jwara shared [an inspiring message in the 'Tribune'](#) on Easter Sunday.

*Left to right: Our Director, Sr Tshidi Matsha (Holy Family sister) and Nondumiso Shangase (parishioner from Emmanuel Cathedral) are enjoying dates.*

*(Photo: Niamh Walsh-Vorster).*



## **A WAY TO REMEMBER AN UN-SUNG HERO OF THE STRUGGLE**

In 1996, the new South African Constitution was ratified, with its strong emphasis on human rights. At the time a group of local artists, under the heading Artists for Human Rights Trust, were engaged to produce a set of engravings, one for each of the 27 rights.

One set of prints hangs in the Constitutional Court where - we are sure - they are admired by Leona Theron, one of our Patrons and a Justice of the highest court in South Africa. Another set is at the UKZN law library where - we hope - some of the law students who work with us actually stop and reflect on them.

We were honoured when Coral Vinsen offered us a set of the prints for us to display at the Denis Hurley Centre. They were formally handed over to us on Freedom Day, the anniversary of the 1994 democratic elections, at an event at the Phansi African Art Museum (who are also receiving a set).

They are vivid black and white prints from lino and woodblock engravings and thus a very limited edition. It is timely to be reminded of the great hopes of the framers of the Constitution and how each one of us has a role to play in continuing to assert and defend those hard-won rights. Having law students work with the homeless and writing articles for the media are both ways of drawing attention to when rights are not observed. The attached article from *Daily Maverick* is worth reading.

The prints need to be mounted and framed which we estimate will cost R800 each (or £40). We are therefore inviting people to make a specific donation to frame each one and use this as a way of memorialising an un-sung Struggle hero. The best-known Liberation activists frequently have roads and buildings

named after them, but there are many people whose role was significant but perhaps known only to family and friends. We therefore hope that this will be a way of redressing that.

If you would like to make a donation, your name and the name of the person you want remembered will be included in a plaque on the frame. Look at the website to choose which print you want framed and then contact us as soon as possible: first come, first served. We hope to receive all the pledges in the next few weeks so that the framed prints can be unveiled on Heritage Day in September.

*Coral Vinsen hands over the sets of prints to Stuart Talbot (for the DHC). Seated is Prof David McQuoid-Mason, our partner in the UKZN Street Law project.*



## **WALKING ALONGSIDE THOSE AFFECTED BY DRUGS**

Our sister organisation the Napier Centre 4 Healing has managed to keep afloat through the pandemic and, despite some severe challenges, has kept its residents safe and drug-free, with many of them returning to their families and back into the community.

However, we heard tragic news about one recently. Skumbuzo Jila was a young man who stayed at the DHC during the hard lockdown; from here he moved to the Napier Centre and completed their programme and has stayed clean and sober for over a year. Sadly, we heard that he was chased by security guards at a mall recently and stabbed to death. After he worked so



hard to turn his life around, it is a tragedy that it was cut short un-necessarily. Our condolences go to his friends and family.

As a way of raising money for the Napier Centre, its Chair Fr Stephen Tully has just started a 1,000 km sponsored walk. Stephen is one of the co-founders of the Denis Hurley Centre, for which he cycled the Cape Argus, so his willingness to put in personal efforts for fundraising are well known. He is walking with Dwain Swiegers, the founder of Gyms4Africa, who is raising money to provide underprivileged people in Africa with access to gyms to combat disease, nurture talent and provide opportunities.

Their month-long Unity Walk began on 23 April in Lesotho and will eventually span 1000 km (620 miles) across four countries, through mountains, forests, beaches, dirt roads and water crossings – all in the name of helping others!

We work closely with the Napier Centre so that some of the young male drug users we meet have a chance of transforming their lives with the months of care and rehabilitation that NC4H can provide. We encourage our supporters to sponsor Father Stephen and also to follow the progress of the Unity Walk via Facebook and Instagram.

*Fr Stephen Tully, somewhere in Lesotho, stops to chat to a local trader!*



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If you wish to support our work, you can donate by EFT:  
First National Bank Durban Main branch 221426  
Account: Denis Hurley Centre Trust A/C No. 622 0426 1002

For more information, and to donate from outside South Africa, see:  
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