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UPDATE

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For supporters in GP:

Dr Raymond Perrier will be delivering a lecture "The Role of the Laity in the Church: lessons from the life of Paddy Kearney" on **Saturday 11 November** at 10am at 15 Molesey Avenue, Auckland Park, JHB (in association with the Jesuit Institute and We Are All Church - SA). RSVP to [Doug Irvine](#). *All are welcome.*

October 2023

Muslim and Jewish Women praying for peace

World Homeless Day - advocacy and poetry

Growing Leaders for Catholic Shools

Possible links to the Rugby World Cup?



A letter to the Mayor: but no reply yet!



Prayer and Work for School Leaders



Siya Kolisi's link to the work of the DHC

WOMEN OF DIFFERENT FAITHS COME TOGETHER FOR PEACE

So many of us have been troubled by what has happened, and continues to happen, in the Middle East and wonder how to respond. As Pope Francis has said: "War is always a defeat." We were thus delighted when we were asked by a Jewish woman and a Muslim woman to help facilitate a prayer meeting. The request came jointly from DUT's Prof. Monique Marks (a long-time partner of the DHC) and from Nadia Meer (whose aunt, Fatima Meer, was a close friend of Archbishop Hurley). Our own Sr Cathy Murrugan was a key participant with her fellow Holy Family sisters. The following report is from Monique:

On the evening of 19 October, an usual event took place in Durban in the midst of the massive destruction and loss of life in the Holy Land. Over 30

women from different cultures and beliefs (Bahá'í, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim) came together peacefully to dialogue about the very distressing situation in Palestine and Israel. The aim was to create a welcoming platform for the sharing of grief and fears as well as hopes, and to join hands in friendship and prayer.

These diverse women met at Saint Joseph's church hall in Morningside. Symbolically wearing white and bearing candles, women spoke of the importance of commonality rather than difference. Their common identities brought them together as mothers, sisters and conscious human beings who are distressed by suffering and injustice. Some have been directly impacted by the existing conflict, with families in Gaza or in Israel.

Theirs was a resounding shared call: "We as South African women say stop the violence. We call for peace!" It is a simple message but one that is not being practiced by global leaders as they continue to make decisions with violent outcomes. Instead they could be looking for just and peaceful solutions utilising their power and influence to promote truth and reconciliation.

The event was facilitated by Hailey Fudu from the Bahá'í community. She held each woman present with care, allowing every person to speak up and out within the bounds of mutual respect and consideration. She provided prayer books from all global religions for the women to explore and many were moved to share short readings from these texts that have meaning in the current context. Interestingly, most women shared something they connected with from a faith other than their own.

Some of the women had braved condemnation from their own communities and their families for participating in this event, thus showcasing the commitment of these women to sisterhood and to mutual care. The spirit of South African Ubuntu emerged in this safe space of sharing: we are who we are because of others; we know that peace is possible even when it appears unattainable.

This group is committed to meeting on an ongoing basis, bringing along menfolk in the future, but holding sisterhood as an example for a better world. For more information, please [contact us](#) and we can pass on your details.



MARKING WORLD HOMELESS DAY

10 October has been declared World Homeless Day and we marked it in two very different ways.

There have been a number of meetings recently, convened at local police stations, at which a wide range of people have come together to express concern about the rise in homelessness in different parts of Durban. One of the largest of these was held at Durban Central by Brigadier Parumasar and almost a hundred people were there: SAPS, Metro Police and private security; some KZN government officials although none from the Municipality; local businesses, residents and Community Policing Forums; NGOs and faith-based organisations.

Although much fear and anxiety was expressed, there was also a commitment to look for sustainable solutions – rather than just moving the problem around – and to working together. Disappointment was widely voiced at how eThekweni, having led the country in its response to the homeless during lockdown, had now fallen far behind other municipalities.

A follow-up meeting, with a smaller but equally diverse group, hosted by Sica's Guest House identified that there had been a lack of engagement with this issue by senior politicians and officials in the Municipality. The group resolved that we needed to reinstate the eThekweni Task Team on Homelessness which had been so effective during lockdown (then chaired by our own Raymond Perrier).

World Homeless Day was thus chosen as an appropriate date to submit a written request to Hon Mxolisi Kaunda, Executive Mayor of eThekweni, to reinstate the Task Team with the active involvement of his office and other senior players. The photo at the top shows Jennifer Fisher (Women and Men of Valour), Ahmed Randeree (Payless Shelter), Xolani Ziqubu-Gamede (DHC's Street Lit project) and Linda Morrison (We Are Durban) outside City Hall. The letter (which is attached) was supported by a wide range of voices from different parts of Durban society. Sadly, 21 days after delivering the letter and despite reminders, we have still heard nothing at all from the office of the Mayor.

Our other World Homeless Day event was much more fun as we hosted part of the Poetry Africa Festival outside in Paddy Lane. This is run by UKZN's Centre for Creative Arts who also partner with us for the Durban International Film Festival.

There were four artists who performed a sequence of poetry and rap, related to their own experience, in English, Sotho and Zulu. They then invited members of the audience, homeless people and passers-by, to come and participate. A homeless man called Bongani Ntombola offered a poem and so did one of the MUT interns who is working at our reception, Phelo Nohloko, who did her own poetry in Xhosa.

Photo (Niamh Walsh-Vorster): left to right - Solly Ramatswi, Masai Sepuru, Jonathan Lefenya and Thuthukani Myeza (The Neo Zulu).



DEVELOPING SCHOOL LEADERS

It is often said that there is a crisis of leadership in South Africa: not only in politics but in business, in education, in the media and in our churches.

As a small contribution to addressing this issue, Sr Cathy and Raymond have been working with Mark Campbell of the KZN Catholic Schools Office to deliver a course through the year to help grow leaders for Catholic schools. Catholic schools in South Africa enjoy a rich mix of learners and educators – Catholics, other Christians and other faiths – and so the participants in this programme also came from a mix of backgrounds, yet all committed to the values of a Catholic school. A few of them have recently started as principals; most are deputies and heads of department who hope one day that they will also hold 'the top spot'.

The programme is one that was developed by Raymond when at the Jesuit Institute, together with the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) and the Catholic Schools Office for Gauteng. Whilst it has been delivered in other parts of the country, 2023 was its first outing in KZN.

The course began in February with a two-night retreat at Coolock House on the South Coast giving the initially 17 participants a chance to look inward at their own values and what their leadership journey had been up to now. They were taught techniques of journaling and self-reflection that they could then

use during the course of the year. Since then they have met every six/eight weeks focusing each time on a different theme: strategic planning, engaging with stakeholders, managing staff, finance and fundraising, and maximising resources. These sessions have benefited from input by school principals with decades of experience and also from the Director of CIE and Bishop Neil Frank of Mariannhill.

The network of Catholic schools - 323 institutions across the country - ranges from wealthy urban independent schools to small farm schools to under-resourced Government schools which are part of the public-schools-on-private-property scheme. Some are owned by bishops (there are six Catholic dioceses covering KZN) and some by religious orders (such as the Holy Family, Marists and Dominicans). This means it is one of the only occasions in which leaders from private and public schools come together with a shared mission and a willingness to learn from each other. The shared learning was also promoted by hosting sessions at different schools over the course of the year. (The picture at the top shows the group at the famous St Francis College under the appropriate motto *Ora et Labora* - Prayer and Work).

The principals are in the final phase of the programme, writing their last assignment this time reflecting on how they have grown personally and professionally over the last 10 months. It has been a privilege to accompany these rising leaders, almost all of them showing great commitment, resourcefulness, patience and spiritual depth in how they respond to the complex issues facing our schools and our country. We wish them well as they complete the programme and continue their journey of leadership in their schools.

Photo: Some of the participants visiting a classroom at Mariannhill Junior Primary.

The school is still waiting for completion by the Department of Education of new classrooms and, until then, there are 60 children, and two classes, operating side by side in each classroom!



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SUPER-BOKS!

A counter to the crisis of leadership was demonstrated by Siya Kolisi and the Springboks who showed that South Africa does have some amazing role models. Their recurrent mantra 'Better Together' is one that the DHC also shares: not only bringing together people of different faiths and different cultural backgrounds, but also enabling organisations (public, private and civil society) to work together for the good of all and especially those who are most vulnerable.

In fact, the twice-winning captain has himself contributed to our work since, until recently, he was playing for the Durban Sharks alongside Hyron Andrews, the husband of our new Clinic Co-ordinator, Maighlin. The three of

them are pictured at the top with the baby that we rescued from the streets of Durban last year when his mother (one our patients) died and the child was abandoned. When big Siya learnt about little Siya he took a keen interest in his plight. The baby - now almost two years old - has just been adopted by his foster family in Pinetown and he has also been re-connected with his mother's relatives. As a result of this connection, we were assisted substantially last year with food donations through the Siya and Rachel Kolisi Foundation and are very grateful to them for their support.

But there is another possible connection between us and the world-beating rugby team. We don't know how much Archbishop Hurley cared about rugby - cricket was his lifelong passion. Nevertheless there is a photo of him from 1931 (below) aged 16 in the St Charles PMB second XV team. (He is on the back row, second from right, identifiable by his height and his ears!).

We could not help noticing that the three dramatic wins for South Africa - in the quarter-final, semi-final and final - were at the *Stade de France* which is actually not in Paris but the nearby suburb of St Denis. In fact, as you can see from the picture below, the stadium is just round the corner from the basilica of the 3rd century martyr and bishop, *St Denis de Paris*, after whom our own nearly-martyred Archbishop was named (which is why he was 'Denis' and not 'Dennis', the usual Irish spelling).

Would it be too much to suggest that our own Denis was lifting up the Boks (and the spirit of South Africa) with his intercessions and that the three miraculous one-point wins could almost be claimed as three miracles of a future *St Denis de Durban*? Let's imagine so, and ask Denis to continue to pray for 'the beloved country', for all the challenges that we face going forwards knowing that we will be 'stronger together'.



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