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December 2025

Blessings for Hannukah, Christmas and the New Year

Financial Situation not looking good at year end
Meal of Reconciliation unites people of Durban
Using media to ensure voices are heard
Honouring two beloved supporters



Mayor of Durban Homeless people makes a surprise visit bruised and beaten



A Thank You to our volunteers and donors

SOBERING NEWS FOR THE END OF 2025

A Christmas newsletter should be one full of comfort and joy – and, as you will see from the other stories, we do have some of that to share as well. But, when updating you, our loyal supporters and partners, we also have to be honest about our situation. And financially we are unfortunately entering a delicate phase.

Funds raised by the DHC have gone up almost every year since we started, even in the years after COVID. In 2025 we expect to have raised R6,124,00 (£272,000 or \$367,000) which is a commendable 12% increase on 2024. However, our costs in 2025 will likely be R6,993,000 (£311,000 or \$419,000), partly as a result of the illegal xenophobic blockades of the hospitals. Simple maths will show that that means an in-year deficit of almost R860,000 (£39,000 or \$52,000).

We are able to deal with the deficit because we set up a 'Sustainability Fund' a few years ago to help us cope with the inevitable tough years. Fortunately, we have not had to dip into it much in the past. But in 2025, we will use a big chunk of the Fund and in 2026 – unless things change dramatically – we will have to use more. Eventually the Sustainability Fund will run out. One of the reasons we have such a Fund is so that we have the cushion to make decisions in a calm and logical way and not be scared into bad decisions for fear that we are going to fall off a cliff.

So the DHC Board set up a thorough-going review of income, expenses and operations in October and November. As a result, we have further trimmed expenses where we can and, regrettably, we have also made some retrenchments. We are helped by the opportunity to fold our Dalton creche into the pre-school that Montessori International is opening in the new year around the corner from Dalton. We are very grateful to Prof Alain Tschudin and his team for working with us over several months to prepare for this and we are also able to re-deploy much of the equipment from Dalton to the new site on Ryde Avenue.

This justifies us in completely closing our permanent presence at Dalton (where we have been for 9 years) especially since the number of homeless people living there has declined. Nevertheless, our mobile clinic will still keep visiting the site and regular patients will be maintained on their ARVs and TB medication.

This move, combined with other efficiencies, has led to us retrenching four staff (two full-time and two part-time); that is in addition to not filling two other staff positions that came empty during 2025. We thank all those who left us, for their service to the DHC. Of course, with fewer people we are not able to do everything we want to do; but we remain confident that we can still provide an excellent service where it is most needed. Furthermore, for the first time ever, we have not given our staff an end-of-year half-month bonus (even though they have all worked very hard this year). Moreover, our senior staff will be receiving a zero pay increase in 2026 and our lower-paid will only get a 2% increase (even though inflation is at 3.6%).

All of these decisions are made with a heavy heart. But the Trustees are focused on controlling expenses where we can to reduce the risk of further deficits in the future. And they are also focused on boosting income. To achieve that, we need your help: if you are an existing donor – thank you so much, and please keep supporting us; if you have been giving to us intermittently, please consider making a regular donation; and if you have good ideas of where to source funds, [let us know](#). Everyone in South Africa is feeling the impact of a slow economy – the DHC is as well, but the vulnerable people we serve feel it more acutely than anyone else. (The full financial report for 2025 will follow in Feb 2026).

Photo: Nombulelo Bambayi, the teacher who has been on loan to us from Montessori, celebrates the final graduating class from our Dalton creche. These young people will move on to primary school in January; and the next pre-school class will start at the new site.



380 DURBANITES UNITED IN SHARING A MEAL

Funding for the DHC comes primarily from individuals, faith groups and businesses in the metro area who want to show solidarity with fellow Durbanites who are less fortunate. After all, Durban is not a poor city – it is just a very unequal city. That is why our Annual Meal of Reconciliation is so important: it is a very visible way of demonstrating solidarity because, at this event, we are not just serving meals to homeless people – we are sitting down and sharing a meal *with* homeless people.

The day is especially important to us since it was our own founder, Paddy Kearney, who in the 1980s first wrote about re-imagining the 16 December – a famously divisive day – as ‘a day of Reconciliation for all South Africans’. Reflecting on the importance of this message, we also noticed how all religious communities have a shared meal as part of their rituals. So that is how we had the idea to create a meal which focuses on what we have in common rather than what divides us.

Part of that is a love of cakes and cool drinks – and we are grateful to those who donated those, especially Boxer Superstores and the Union of Jewish Women. And we also share a love of breyani, the traditional Durban way of serving food at a large celebration. We want to thank the donors who represented the four main faiths of Durban: Christian - Devesh Arulappan (from the Catholic parish in Newlands West); Muslim - our Patron Dr AV Mahomed; Jewish - the Union of Jewish Women (again); and Hindu - Food for Life.

We were especially moved by this last donation since they are part of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness who are just reeling from the terrible tragedy when their temple in Verulam outside Durban collapsed killing five of their members. We offer our condolences and prayers to all those affected.

Our Meal of Reconciliation always brings together a wide range of people: homeless and housed, South Africans and foreign nationals, all faiths, all colours. And this year, thanks to the young son of a family visiting from France, the age range literally went from 4 to 94! In addition, we had an unexpected guest in the form of Hon Councillor Cyril Xaba, the Mayor of eThekweni, the Municipality which includes Durban (*see photo at the top*). Though he had visited when he was a Provincial minister, this was his first time at the DHC as Mayor. It was a great opportunity for him to get an insight into what we do and also to speak to some homeless people himself and share a meal with them. You can [read a reflection on the meal](#) from one of our Patrons, Rev Mike Vorster.

Gestures of solidarity are very important. But only if they are symbolic of something deeper. As a community we also need to call out and challenge actions of abuse, neglect and intimidation. And we need to support all those who are trying to make a positive difference in our city.

Photo: an aerial shot shows the mix of people enjoying our Meal of Reconciliation.



NOT YET TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

It is good that we have been able to re-connect directly with the Mayor since we really want City Hall to engage with us at this time. We are very anxious about some of the initiatives that they are funding or that they seem to be tolerating.

We have written before about the Municipality's ill-conceived plan to exile homeless people far from Durban in a place that the homeless themselves have called 'a dumping ground'. Many of the people sharing the Meal of Reconciliation with the Mayor are, we know, ones who are very worried about this. And they also report to us that, in preparing for the opening of this new site, the Municipality is spending even less effort to maintain the sanitation and ablution facilities at the sites that they have been running (and are now running down) in the city centre. One of the reasons we are leaving Dalton is because, despite years of asking the Municipality to sort out the toilet block that they installed, the sewage problem has got worse and worse finally flooding into the area where we ran our creche.

Neglect, shoddy upkeep and poor planning are bad enough as examples of *passive* harm. But recently we have seen evidence that the Municipality, and people funded by them, are *actively* harming people whose only crime is to be poor.

Over several weeks, a number of homeless people have presented at our clinic with clear evidence of beatings. Each one has told us independently that these are the result of violence by Ensure Security, a private firm employed by the Municipality. We have seen people with bruised feet, tramline marks on their backs, and severe damage to their faces (*see photo at the top*). One person is at risk of losing an eye after an especially vicious assault.

The doctors and nurses in our clinic team, already working hard to deal with all the usual diseases of poverty, have been stretched further because of the on-going xenophobia that has prevented many of our patients from accessing Government

to hospitals. To this have now added the shocking and unnecessary work of patching up patients who are the victims of senseless violence, seemingly funded by our money as ratepayers.

The Municipality and the security company have inevitably denied knowledge of any wrong-doing; the homeless' experience would contradict this. With support from the UKZN Street Law project, the DHC will continue to monitor this over the Festive Season so that any incidents can be recorded and monitored.

Driven on by Archbishop Hurley's mission 'to be a voice for the voiceless' we have been asking partners to help us respond to this. We are delighted that the Navi Pillay Research Group at UKZN – named after our Patron, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights – has taken up these complaints with the Mayor, who immediately promised to investigate. And online [social justice journal Ground Up](#) has covered this story in detail. We are grateful to them and other members of the media for their professional and fearless reporting.

In fact, we count that there have been at least 109 articles or broadcast items about the DHC over the last 12 months – at about two per week that is an impressive number and credit is due to our pro bono publicist, Illa Thompson. She herself has a very moving [reflection in The Post](#) for Christmas in which she explains how much our Street Lit booksellers value Dickens (and not just at Christmas time). Our Director had an opinion piece about the Festive Season in [the Independent on Saturday](#). And to round off the year, he was even [featured on the cover of Pulse](#), the magazine produced by UKZN's Department of Humanities.

We are grateful to the media for helping us share 'tidings of great joy' throughout the year when we have good news stories about marginalised people. And we also remain committed to sharing the stories that some people would rather keep hidden. The experience of the Holy Family at Christmas was a mix of joy and tragedy – we know that is the experience also of the communities with which we work; part of our job us to make sure that their stories are heard.

Photo: the DHC continues to be a 'voice for the voiceless' by leveraging the power of the media: in print, on line, TV and radio.



Fix the issues that tarnish tourism

All DHRM's focus is a leading tourism sector, created by doing nothing and a surge in tourism, the city faces an unsettling challenge: beach closures due to pollution, but does not the ocean. But Lagos, Elizabeth Beach, Constantia Beach, and others back have shut to the public, highlighting ongoing struggle with the city's water infrastructure.

This is happening at a time when the world's biggest economies are in a world-class competition. The tourism industry provides a major source of income for the city, and it is essential to ensure that our tourism sector remains vibrant and attracts a wide range of visitors. It is not enough for the city to only attract tourists; it must also ensure that the quality of the visitor experience is high. This means addressing issues such as water supply, waste management, and public safety.

While the city's tourism sector is a major source of income, it is also a source of pride. The city's beaches and landmarks are a major attraction for visitors from around the world. It is essential to ensure that the quality of the visitor experience is high. This means addressing issues such as water supply, waste management, and public safety.

The spirit of Christmas, a season of goodwill and generosity, is a reminder that our communities should not only focus on economic growth, but also on the well-being of all its citizens. It is essential to ensure that the quality of the visitor experience is high. This means addressing issues such as water supply, waste management, and public safety.

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Goodwill to all humankind and not just at Christmas time

THE CITY OF ACCIDENTAL is a term that entered the city's lexicon in 1996 – a year that coincided with the city's 100th anniversary. The term was coined by the then Mayor, Helen Zille, to describe the city's unique position as a global city that is not just a financial hub, but also a city of culture, education, and innovation. The term has since become a source of pride for the city, and it is a testament to the city's resilience and ability to overcome adversity.

But the city's history is not just one of triumph and success. It is also a story of struggle and hardship. The city has faced many challenges over the years, from economic downturns to social inequality. But it is the way in which the city has responded to these challenges that has made it a city of resilience and hope.

It is this spirit of resilience and hope that is the heart of the city's identity. It is the spirit that has allowed the city to overcome adversity and emerge stronger than ever. It is the spirit that has allowed the city to become a global city that is not just a financial hub, but also a city of culture, education, and innovation.

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COMMENT



DR. NAVI PILLAY

The City of Accidental – a term that entered the city's lexicon in 1996 – is a perfect analogy for the spirit of the city. The city is a place of resilience and hope, a place where the spirit of goodwill to all humankind is not just a Christmas-time phenomenon, but a year-round reality.

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Our *Nkosinathi* kitchen takes on a special significance at this time of year. The Zulu term is the equivalent of *Emmanuel* which the Christmas story reminds us means 'God is with us'. And so, as we celebrate the world-changing event of God coming among us as a human being in the person of the infant Jesus, we can reflect on how God is still with us: in the hands that prepare and serve food, and in the eager faces that receive the food and say thank you – each of us made in God's image.

In our first 10 years of operations, our kitchen served 1.3 million meals and our likely tally for 2025 will add a further 175,000. Each meal is a welcome sign of care and concern for a homeless person in Durban. But it is also the start of building a relationship of trust which enables us to deliver all the other services that we offer: counselling, primary healthcare, HIV and TB testing, showers, clothes washing, training, family reunification, entrepreneurship and work opportunities.

The meals are only possible because of the food that is donated (from individuals and supermarkets), the funding that enables us to pay our staff and our bills, and the many, many hours of volunteering. The volunteering continues through this Festive Season since we will be serving on all our usual days even if they are public holidays. This past year we have benefited from regular volunteers like the Seva ladies of Durban North, St Henry's Marist College (*photo at the top*) and other schools, and different church communities and corporates. Just recently, we were pleased to welcome a team from the Iqraa Trust with their new director, Milo Mohamed. They were in fact the organisation that gave the very first large cheque to help build the DHC back in 2012!

We also wish to thank the various churches and individuals who each week make and send down sandwiches to us, led by Methodist Churches in Durban North and Musgrave and Catholic parishes like Holy Trinity and Our Lady of Fatima. And we are also grateful for donations of ingredients from members of the public and especially from SA Harvest, Fulham Bakery and Good Luck Foods.

We want to thank and acknowledge all those who have made *Nkosinathi* run so smoothly, under the watchful gaze of our cooks Tracy Bolt and Nonhlanhla 'Ma' Ndlovu. But we decided to give particular recognition to two women who, though advanced in years, really stand out both for their volunteering and their fundraising.

One is Shirley Masojada who knew Archbishop Hurley very well. She and her family have always taken a keen interest in the DHC: she was still volunteering in the kitchen regularly in her mid-80s and then was part of one of the sandwich-making groups.

What is more she has facilitated substantial financial donations from the family foundation and also donations of food via Boxer Superstores.

Shirley has just celebrated her 90th birthday; our other honorand is about to turn 87. She is Phil Perrier – who happens to be the mother of our Director. When at home in the UK, she regularly runs tombolas in the local Catholic churches of Chelmsford and also cooks and sells Indian food, all as ways of raising funds for the DHC. And when visiting Durban, she also makes money for us selling quality clothes and will also host her 6th Indian fundraising dinner. Over the past 11 years, she has been one of our single largest benefactors.

We hope that the fundraising and volunteering by these older ladies is an inspiration to people who are much younger to think about what we can do to help. In honour of them, a tea party was held at *Nkosinathi* and a plaque unveiled naming it 'Phil and Shirley's Kitchen'. Mikaela York (a Trustee, a Patron and the niece of Archbishop Hurley) said that it was right to speak of them in the same breath as her late uncle. "They claim they are just ordinary women, but what they do is extraordinary!"

The dedication on the plaque reads:

We remember all who have donated money, food and time to enable us to serve over 1.3 million meals in our first 10 years.

We especially honour Phil Perrier and Shirley Masojada who, aged in their 80s, have been tireless in preparing meals and raising funds, inspired by their love of the poor and their dedication to the Gospel.

"I am the bread of life: whoever comes to me will never go hungry." (Jn 6:35)

We pray that no one in Durban will go hungry - physically or spiritually - in 2026!

Photo (Val Adamson): Phil Perrier and Shirley Masojada (5th and 6th from the left) in the DHC kitchen surrounded by staff and Trustees.



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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:

www.denishurleycentre.org

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