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February 2026

Blessings to readers observing Lent and Ramadan

Speaking out for victims of violence
AGM with Mayor and Archbishop
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Entering into periods of Fasting



**Mayor meets our
Chair and Deputy
Chair**



**Rob receives
award from
Archbishop**



**Stuart
distributing
Ashes**

GROTESQUE VIOLENCE CARRIED OUT BY MUNICIPALITY-FUNDED SECURITY FIRM

A 5-minute video posted on social media by the DHC has caused outrage and demands for criminal punishment of the perpetrators. The CCTV footage shows a homeless man lying on the ground in the middle of the night outside the Embassy Building in central Durban. Personnel from Ensure Security, a private firm contracted by eThekweni Municipality, surround him and take turns to beat him with what looks like a large stick. Other Ensure staff stand by and watch, doing nothing to prevent the crime or to defend the man. After almost five minutes, he is taken away in an Ensure branded vehicle.

Though the incident was on 18 December, this footage only came to the DHC a few weeks ago. The video has been seen tens of thousands of times on the [DHC](#)

[Facebook page](#). It can also be viewed on our [You Tube channel](#) – but we warn you it is gruelling to watch.

The footage was shared with both the Mayor's office and Kyle Connolly, the CEO of Ensure, before it was released on Facebook. "We did this to be clear that there could be no cover up or attempts to silence us," explained DHC Director, Dr Raymond Perrier. In fact, a letter from Ensure's lawyers Woodhead Bigby did demand that the DHC remove the video and apologise; they received a robust response from the prestigious law firm ENS, who have very generously acted *pro bono* as lawyers for the DHC since we started.

A press release from Ensure confirmed that the video was genuine, admitted that Ensure personnel were involved and condemned the behaviour as "completely unacceptable". But while condemning the actions, Ensure also claim that the man in the video was part of a criminal syndicate (as if this was some sort of justification) and that he was "taken to SAPS processing". However, we have seen no proof that anyone was taken in to the police by Ensure that night and indeed, despite the efforts of the DHC, we have still not found the victim.

The beating in the video is shocking enough on its own; even more troubling is that it is consistent with a number of other reports the DHC has received. Since early December the DHC has been seeing badly wounded homeless people at our clinic; this was reported to the Mayor in person in mid-December and indeed featured in our December newsletter. Moreover, as long ago as July 2025, TB HIV Care (another health NGO operating in central Durban) had raised a formal complaint about Ensure Security with PSiRA, the authority that is supposed to regulate the private security industry.

The DHC has been trying to make sure that criminal cases are opened against the assailants and also the on-lookers (as co-conspirators). But our attempts have been met with evasion and silence from SAPS, despite representations to both the Regional and Provincial Police Commissioners ([as reported in Ground-Up](#)). Moreover, fearing that this is part of a pattern of illegal behaviour, the DHC has asked the Municipality to conduct a thorough investigation into Ensure Security and review their contract. To date, the response from the 'Director of the City Integrity and Investigations Directorate' is that he is satisfied that Ensure has dismissed the personnel involved and that he will make no attempt to pursue criminal charges. At the time of writing, we are waiting for responses from the Mayor's Office, SAPS and PSiRA.

We still do not know what happened to the victim in the video. We also do not know how many more people have been beaten by Ensure Security though we have seen shocking wounds on the bodies of several homeless men in the past few weeks. Even more shocking is the meagre response from the people we have approached even though they have taken an oath to uphold the constitutional rights of all people in South Africa. Impunity, silence and obfuscation enabled the Apartheid regime to cover up the crimes it committed in the name of 'security'. We pray that the courage of Archbishop Hurley and Paddy Kearney will continue to help us to follow their example in being a voice for the voiceless.

Photo: This patient was happy to be photographed in our clinic so that the world could see the wounds and bruises that he says he received from Ensure Security personnel.



MAYOR & ARCHBISHOP ATTEND ANNUAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

The DHC's Annual Stakeholders' Meeting took place on Sat 14 February – the day after the anniversary of Archbishop's Hurley's death 22 years ago. We were doubly honoured that present were both Archbishop Mandla Jwara (the Chair of our Patrons) and Hon Cyril Xaba (the Mayor of eThekweni).

Despite the shadow cast by the video reported above, the Mayor did not attempt to defend the actions of the Municipality. He focused his talk, as requested, on his own memories of Archbishop Hurley and Paddy Kearney. He saw both of them as models of “a compassionate response to the vulnerable”. The Mayor shared very moving stories about how he had been influenced by them as a young student at the then University of Natal and in particular about his role in the student-led campaign to have +Hurley elected as Chancellor. He recalled with pride how he received his degree from +Hurley on the same day that an honorary doctorate was also awarded to Nelson Mandela.

Our Director presented his review of the year's activities using as his theme the famous prayer of St Francis of Assisi – “Make me an Instrument of your Peace”. 2026 has been declared the ‘Year of St Francis’ and the audience was reminded that the late Pope chose the name Francis specifically because he saw the saint as a model of how we should be ‘the Church of the poor’. The presentation can be followed in two 20-minute sections on [our You Tube channel](#). (A 2-page summary of the details of the report is also attached).

The Director highlighted many of the achievements of the last year but also the on-going challenges of foreign patients still being illegally blocked from accessing Government hospitals and now the ‘hit and run’ attempts by the Municipality to address homelessness in Durban. He pledged a willingness to work with Government while reiterating our commitment to speak out when necessary. He also explained (as we have reported before) the financial difficulties facing the DHC and the need to increase fundraising after experiencing a deficit in 2025 of R½ million (£23,000, \$31,000)..

After the AGM, some of the 60 people present moved to Emmanuel Cathedral where a Memorial Mass was held in honour of +Hurley. His successor, the current Archbishop of Durban, in his homily reflected on Sirach 15:15. “The life of +Hurley reminds us that what we choose has consequences and we have the chance, like him, to choose generosity over selfishness. Despite his privileges, he freely chose to stand on the side of the oppressed: to choose light over darkness.” He concluded by warning that the good work started by +Hurley was far from being completed and ended with the words

“Archbishop Hurley, pray for us”. This gave confidence to many present who hope that one day we will be able to invoke the prayers of ‘St Denis of Durban’.

The Mass ended, as is now traditional, with a candlelit procession to his shrine where wreaths were laid at on behalf of the Archdiocese, the Hurley family, religious congregations, and ecumenical and interfaith partners.

Photo: The Archbishop leads others to pray at +Hurley's shrine in Emmanuel Cathedral and lay wreaths.



OUTSTANDING SERVICE IS RECOGNISED PUBLICLY

While our AGM was taking place, Patrick Regnard (who had been a regular volunteer at the DHC) was being ordained as a priest for the same order as +Hurley, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. We were delighted that he asked for the prayer in honour of +Hurley to be part of his ordination and first Mass.

Meanwhile, the AGM was a chance to commemorate another member of the OMI: Bishop Barry Wood who was Auxiliary Bishop under Cardinal Napier and a dear friend of the DHC. Each year since his death, awards are presented In +Barry's name to recognise outstanding service by both paid and unpaid workers at the DHC.

Nominations are received from staff, volunteers, service users and partners, and then reviewed by a small committee.

This year the work of our clinic featured heavily which is not surprising given the extra work and additional stress they have faced as a result of the illegal xenophobic protests. One of the runners up in the staff category was Philile Zulu, who has been a Community Health Worker for 9 years and so is the longest serving member of the clinic team. A runner-up in the volunteer category was Dr Don O'Mahony who comes in to the clinic two mornings a week. Dr Don's testimonies about rejected foreign patients and beaten homeless patients have been key in our campaigns for justice.

The head of the clinic, Sr Thobile Mthembu received the staff award in recognition of her commitment to the clinic during these challenging times: showing up every day ready to fight the good fight, advocate for the rights of her patients, and to encourage her team. One nominator wrote "I salute her bravery, strength of character, tenacity, commitment and resilience."

The other staff runner-up was Rob Wolhuter, our Building Manager who was commended for his excellent work in getting the building back on track and solving some seemingly intractable problems in a creative way. The other runner-up in the volunteer category was not a person but an organisation; Montessori Association Internationale. They have assisted our crèche by providing a paid expert teacher and have now enabled us to close our project and transfer our children to their much better facility nearby.

Finally, the winner in the volunteer category was Sphehile Ntanzu, who sits quietly outside the DHC every day. While his main job is a Street Lit bookseller, he constantly makes the time to help the DHC team whether in serving meals or setting up rooms. His nominators described him as passionate, dedicated, respectful, and good-hearted. All great qualities.

All those named received a certificate and the two winners also got shopping vouchers. We applaud them and all our staff and volunteers who set such high standards of service throughout the year.

Photo (Illa Thompson): Some of the award winners with Archbishop Jwara (left to right): Sphehile Ntanzu, Prof Alain Tschudin (on behalf of Montessori), Sr Thobile Mthembu and Dr Don O'Mahony.



A PERIOD OF FASTING BEGINS

Each day outside the DHC, the noon-time Angelus bell from the Cathedral rings out around the same time as the midday call to prayer from the mosque next door. Our Director reflected on this in a recent [article in the 'Southern Cross'](#).

This daily coincidence has been heightened this year by the fact that the start of Lent (the Christian period of fasting) was just one day before the beginning of the Islamic month of Ramadan. We celebrated Ash Wednesday at the DHC as part of our weekly staff prayers. Team members were invited to reflect on the meaning of this holy period and receive ashes on their forehead as a sign of turning back to God.

We similarly offered ashes to those waiting in Paddy Lane that day for lunch after explaining the meaning of the symbol and that accepting ashes was a way of showing God and the world that you wanted to turn your life around (*pictured at the top*).

Fasting in Lent is the reason for a famous annual food tradition the day before – Pancake Tuesday! In the Middle Ages people were using up the sugar, eggs and butter

they would deny themselves for the next 40 days. Most of our homeless guys eat less than regular people who are fasting – but that does not mean that they cannot benefit from the pancake tradition. We were thus delighted when a regular partner school, Fatima Dominican Convent from Durban North, offered us 600 pancakes for the homeless. This was possible because every girl in the school was involved in making batter, and then a battalion of parents spent hours cooking (and tossing) the pancakes.

Lent runs until early April; Ramadan until probably 19 March. Our staff team will soon go away for a day of Lenten reflection. We are also inviting non-Muslims to join with our neighbours from the Grey Street Mosque for a shared iftar on Sunday 8 March.

The next few weeks are a particular time for Christians and Muslims to think about what we can do to reach out to those less fortunate. The DHC especially welcomes volunteers (individuals, families and groups) so that this can be a time not just for 'giving up' something but for 'giving back' something to help others. [Click here](#) to find out more. We also welcome financial donations which are necessary for us to continue our work. [South African donors](#) might note that money gifted to us before the end of Saturday 28 February will help them reduce their next tax bill. ([UK donors](#) have a bit longer, until 5 April!). [Donors in the rest of the world](#) can give whenever they feel moved!

Photos: Parents at Fatima Dominican Convent School enjoying the task of pouring and frying 600 pancakes!



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www.denishurleycentre.org

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