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September 2024

**Inspirational Christian Conference**  
**Cross of Nails arrives in Durban**  
**Talks about Paddy Kearney**  
**Farewell to two fearless South Africans**



**Connecting two  
St Michael's**



**Telling the story  
of Paddy**



**Bishop Trish  
Fresen RIP**

**REFLECTIONS ON AN ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE: RISE UP  
AND BUILD**

"Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." This powerful theme shaped the **Ibandla Malivuke conference** (meaning 'Rise Up and Build') which brought together over 100 Christians from the greater Durban area who are involved in transforming their communities.

The DHC was represented by 26 staff members who attended as this year's Founders Day retreat – an event we always hold close to Paddy Kearney's birthday. The conference was organised by **CAST**, the outreach arm of Westville Baptist Church now known as Home Ground; it was held at **Glenridge Church** in central Durban. We are most grateful to both these churches since they have been great supporters of the DHC and we were pleased to be partners in such a vibrant ecumenical event.

The conference structure was notably creative, moving away from traditional speaker-led presentations to foster more interactive discussions. The relaxed atmosphere extended into tea breaks in which attendees shared the treats they had brought, or 'paid it forwards' by buying an extra cappuccino so someone else could benefit. All of this contributed to a sense of community and connection.

The central focus of the conference was on fostering engagement, with resources readily available to ensure meaningful interaction among participants. The biblical foundation for the discussions was the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 4-7), a well-known passage that includes the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer. This scripture provided the context for exploring the themes of repentance and the Kingdom of God.

On the first day, the theme centred on understanding the Kingdom of God as a place where justice is lived out. Rev. Tsakani Sibanda, a minister from the Nazarene Church, delivered a powerful message, urging all to recognise that the Kingdom of God is not just a future promise but is already here. She challenged participants to reflect on who is part of this Kingdom, especially those who are marginalised. Her reflection on the 'politics of the stomach' emphasised how physical hunger can drive people's actions, pointing to the deeper spiritual hunger for righteousness and justice.

In one of the afternoon sessions, focused on 'Blessed are those who mourn', two staff from the DHC offered personal reflections – Marie Goreth from the clinic and Stuart Talbot our empowerment co-ordinator. Their heartfelt contributions led the conference into a collective time of lamentation, during which attendees reflected on the pain we experience and also cause in our communities, and how this falls short of the Kingdom vision.

The theme of 'Blessed are the peacemakers' was introduced by Rev Zenzile Molo from The Warehouse in Cape Town. Posing the critical question: *What is the difference between peace-making and peace-keeping?* He prompted us to think about how we can actively pursue justice and peace in the face of oppressive systems. The conference concluded with workshops on various aspects of peace-making, including its role in the church, the artist's role in creating peace, and the use of inner peace as a tool for resistance and activism.

Stuart commented afterwards: "The *Ibandla Malivuke* conference was a transformative experience for our team, challenging us to reflect deeply on our work and how we live out the values of the Kingdom of God in the world today."

Looking ahead, attached are details of the upcoming **National Conversation on Homelessness** which Durban will be hosting in 7 weeks' time. Please feel free to share, and email us to register your interest or to find out more.

*Photo: Members of the DHC team involved in one of the discussions at Ibandla Malivuke.*



## COVENTRY CROSS OF NAILS ARRIVES IN DURBAN

We wrote in June about the DHC joining the worldwide **Community of the Cross of Nails** (CCN). Originating from Coventry England, following the destruction of the Anglican cathedral in the Second World War, this has grown to become a network of over 250 like-minded organisations across 45 countries. All of us are committed to three key principles: healing the wounds of history, celebrating diversity, and building a culture of justice and peace. These are not only guiding principles of the DHC but we hope – in the 30th anniversary of Liberation – that they are still key principles for South Africa as a nation.

The symbol of membership is a cross made up of three nails. Originally, they were nails salvaged from the roof of the burnt-out mediaeval cathedral. Now they are made for CCN by inmates in a German prison. For Christians, the nails immediately recall the violence inflicted on Jesus when he was crucified; so they are a reminder to us to ask for forgiveness for the pain that we have inflicted, and to be prepared to forgive those who have caused us pain. But they also remind us that from this symbol of violence comes the promise of new life. Such an image resonates closely with our daily work at the DHC where so many of the homeless people we meet have been hurt by others and some have also caused hurt to others. The CCN mantra 'Father Forgive' echoes around our halls too.

In June, at a ceremony in the UK, the Anglican Dean of Coventry had presented our cross to the Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, one of our UK Patrons; we now completed that process this month when the Anglican Bishop of Natal, Right Rev Nkosinathi Ndwandwe ceremoniously handed over the cross to the Chair of our Patrons, Most Rev Mandla Jwara, +Hurley's successor as Archbishop of Durban. Also present were church leaders from Congregational, Lutheran and Pentecostal churches.

The prayer service took place at **Holy Family College** which gave an opportunity to tell the young learners about the history of reconciliation in Europe after the War, and also in South Africa after 1994. The question they were asked to consider was how each of them is called to foster reconciliation in their own communities today. Holy Family College was especially appropriate since it has such a culturally diverse group of learners, both South African and from other parts of the continent. It was especially moving when they shared prayers in English, Zulu, Afrikaans, French, Eritrean and SA sign language.

The service then continued outside with a procession to the garden where the children assembled around a cross made of charred roof beams – echoing the cross in Coventry. It being the start of Spring, they flowered the cross and also scattered seeds in the



flower beds to remind us how new life comes after death.

Later in the month close to CCN Sunday, the DHC continued the commemoration with a staff prayer service focusing on the Cross of Nails. Then our director preached at **St Michael's Anglican Church Umhlanga** on their patronal feast day, drawing a connection with Coventry Cathedral which is also dedicated to St Michael (*photo above of the Rector and longtime DHC supporter, Fr Andrew Warmback*).

The Cross of Nails will now become a focus during our weekly staff prayers; the Litany of Reconciliation of the CCN will be part of our regular prayer practice at the DHC.

Click [here](#) to watch videos from the live stream of the service at Holy Family College and the Eucharist at St Michael's (Raymond's sermon starts at 24'44").

*Photo: Christian leaders and school children gathered around the flowered cross lent by Diakonia Council of Churches. See [our Facebook page](#) for more photos.*



## TALKING ABOUT PADDY – AND INSPIRING NEW AUDIENCES

While preaching at St Michael's, Raymond also drew reference to the inspiration of Paddy Kearney. Just as the Provost of Coventry had walked through the ruins of St Michael's Cathedral and dared to imagine new life and a new building, so Paddy had walked through the declining area around Emmanuel Cathedral 15 years ago and dared to imagine new life and a new building – and that is how we now have the DHC.

On the back of his recently published book about Paddy, Raymond has been giving talks around KZN to highlight how Paddy, as a committed lay person, spent his life putting his faith into action. The book is sub-titled 'A Prophet for our Times' since we believe, five years after his death, that Paddy's example can still give us many insights into how we are to respond to injustice today.

Fr Stephen Tully – who when Administrator of Emmanuel Cathedral worked closely with Paddy in establishing the DHC – invited Raymond to preach one weekend at **All Saints Ballito**. Speaking with him was Sbusiso Mnguni, the Street Lit book vendor who is now running a permanent bookshop in Ballito's Lifestyle Centre. His personal story of transformation was a great example of the bigger process of transformation in which the DHC is engaged.

Raymond has also spoken this month at the **Rotary Club** in Westville, the **Natal Forum** that meets in Hillcrest, and the '**University of the Third Age**' in Howick. It was especially moving that, at the latter event, there were a number of people who had worked closely with Paddy: Louise Rash née Torr, whose husband chaired the event and

who worked with Paddy at Diakonia in the 1980s; Marilyn Aitken, who was a member of the Grail Community that had first broadened Paddy's horizons when he was a young Marist brother in the 1960s; Tony Gamley, who wrote the first book about +Hurley in 2001; and Elizabeth Gaywood who had arranged the beautiful Buddhist Sand Mandala that Paddy was so delighted for the DHC to host in 2018.

It was a particular honour that – aged over 90 but still fighting fit – Anglican Bishop Emeritus Michael Nuttall was present. He had worked closely with Paddy and with +Hurley, and was in the heart of attempts to reduce conflict between the UDF and the IFP in the late 1980s. +Michael is known worldwide for the sermon he delivered at Archbishop Tutu's funeral and he also played a role at Paddy's funeral. He is immortalised in the DHC in the large photograph of religious leaders defying danger as they led the Freedom March in September 1989.

Raymond is available for talks to schools, churches and community groups. In South Africa, his book can be [bought on-line](#) and also over the counter at Pauline's bookshop (JHB and Durban), the Catholic Bookshop (Cape Town) and Exclusive Books (Gateway, Durban). [Email him](#) if you would like to buy a dedicated and signed copy.

*Photo: Raymond's inconvenient moon boot did not prevent him from speaking to an audience of over 200 members of the Natal Forum at Holy Trinity Church in Hillcrest.*



## THE LOSS OF TWO FEARLESS SOUTH AFRICANS

This past month we lost two great South Africans with a link to the DHC.

We joined with so many others in mourning the loss of Hon. Pravin Gordhan, a significant figure in South African politics. He held high office in Government as Minister for Finance as well as other cabinet positions. His years of service and integrity in political life stood out in modern South Africa.

He never forgot his roots as a pharmacist operating in the area around Emmanuel Cathedral. In the 1970s, he was part of a team offering adult education classes in the old Parish Centre where the DHC now stands, trying to remedy the failings of an education system which excluded people from high achievement because of the colour of their skin. At the DHC we now face the consequences of post-1994 educational failings, with so many young people ending up homeless because they cannot find work.

Pravin cut his teeth as a Struggle activist in Durban and was fondly remembered by our Patron Ela Gandhi who knew him from the earliest days of banning orders, student strikes, and covert political mobilisation. She paid tribute to him as someone who was strong, astute, committed, simple, straight-forward and logical. Another Patron, Dr AV



Mahomed from the Jumma Masjid, wrote: "You have served the country and its people. Your job is not over and we hope we all carry on your legacy."

Pravin and Paddy Kearney worked closely side by side in the Struggle and we were touched that he took the time to come down to Durban for Paddy's funeral in 2018. He said that he had to be there: "You don't know how many times Paddy saved my life!" Pravin was delighted to deliver the 2022 Paddy Kearney Memorial Lecture despite significant work pressures. In the last few weeks of his life, he also found the time to write the foreword for Raymond's book about Paddy (see above).

A significant figure in South African Church history who has died is Bishop Trish Fresen (*pictured at the top*). She had been a Dominican sister and, with others, defied the Apartheid regime by driving for racially integrated Catholic schools in the 1970s. She tells the story of how, when principal of St Agnes in Welkom, she was arrested and marched off school premises while her multi-racial children leaned out of the windows and sang the hymn *Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrica* (at the time banned, and now part of the national anthem). At her funeral, her friends honoured Archbishop Hurley because he had arranged the legal assistance that released her from prison.

She spent several years teaching in the Catholic seminary and then did something which for some was a cause of scandal and for others a prophetic act: with other Catholic women around the world, she was ordained a priest and then later a bishop, both ceremonies conducted by male Catholic bishops who were defying Vatican rules that ordination can only be conferred on men.

Interestingly, in an interview with *The Mercury* in July 1991, one year before he retired, +Hurley said: "I have great difficulty in seeing what problem there is in ordaining women." +Trish died aged 84 on 3 September, the date of the commemoration of the martyr Phoebe whom St Paul refers to as a Deacon (Rom 16:1-2).

We offer our condolences to the families and friends of those who have died and our prayers they they may rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Photo: Sitting at Friday prayers at the Jumma Masjid in 2016 (left to right) - AV Mahomed, Ravi Pillay, former MEC for Finance in KZN, and the late Pravin Gordhan.*



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