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UPDATE

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February 2021 Update

1st ever 'Virtual' Hurley Weekend
Winners of Barry Wood Award
Destruction in Dalton once again
Acknowledgement of the work of Belinda Scott



**Special guest
for the Barry
Wood Awards**



**eTV shine a
light on Dalton
destruction**



**An old friend of
Paddy moves to
new challenges**

OUR FIRST VIRTUAL HURLEY WEEKEND BREAKS RECORDS

Each year, near +Hurley's death anniversary on 13 February, we commemorate the late Archbishop and feed back on the work of the centre that carries his name. Unable to do this face to face because of COVID, we instead organised a 'virtual' Hurley Weekend – all the usual elements but delivered on-line. We are thrilled at the positive responses we have received. And if you have not watched yet, don't worry because all the material is still available to view.

Emmanuel Cathedral is the scene of a moving video of prayers and music at the Archbishop's shrine (with an echo of the concert held for his Centenary in 2015). Our main memorial Mass was not celebrated in the Cathedral but instead in Texas by Fr Ron Rolheiser, a member of +Hurley's Oblate order and a world-renowned spiritual writer. He speaks of +Hurley as a 'true prophet', defined because he was driven by the power of love not alienation, because he drew his inspiration from God not from ideologies, and because he was always focused on the poor.

The feedback element of the AGM includes two reports by our director and also videos from various groups involved in our work: service users, staff members, volunteers, trustees, NGO partners, patrons, donors and religious leaders. Since we were not

restricted by people being in one room, we were able to include voices that might not otherwise be heard and also people from around the world. There is also a heartfelt thank you to all the artists who have helped this past year (with music by Melvin Peters) and an impassioned plea for the arts delivered by Musa Hlatshwayo. In total, the voices of over 70 people appear in the Hurley weekend material.

We are delighted that so many people have been watching the videos since they were launched on 13 February: in the first week alone 1,050 views. A few people also participated in a live Q&A which was also recorded. Sr Marie-Henry Keane OP, a long-standing collaborator with +Hurley and Paddy, watching from the UK commented: "Nothing prepared me emotionally for the testimony of the homeless: how they have been treated, the affect this has had on their lives and their hopes for a better future. I wept, not once, but three times."

We have been sharing this material also with staff members and service users. Eric Makalo, a homeless StreetLit bookseller, commented 'I can't believe that so many important people around the world care about our lives'. One staff member said: "Now I realise that we have to always be good ambassadors because so many people are watching us!"

Some of the 70 voices featured in our Hurley Weekend videos.



BARRY WOOD AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE

One of the video elements is the presentation of the annual Awards for Outstanding Service. These are named after the late Auxiliary Bishop of Durban: his values are the values that we hope that our staff and volunteers live by.

Our special guest was Rt Rev Sithembele Sipuka, Catholic bishop of Umtata and currently President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (a role twice held by +Hurley). He talked +Barry dual commitment: to serving the poor but also speaking out against injustice and challenging structural inequality.

Fr Sabelo Mkhize then introduced the winners for the Volunteer Award. It has been a strange year for volunteering: many of our traditional older volunteers have had to stay at home to keep safe; we have lost out on the school groups, sodalities and corporates who usually volunteer; and yet we also welcomed many new volunteers.

In this category there were two runners up: **Anivesh Singh** who, through his company Hashtag Books and also the Durban Book Fair, has supported the StreetLit project and in particular made sure that our booksellers had some income during lockdown; and **Michaela Naicker**, an experienced social worker who worked with Sr Cathy to place every one of the 100 sick, elderly and disabled homeless men who were living in our centre.

The award winners are husband and wife **Geetha and Jayan Pillay** who were volunteering even before the centre was built, working quietly and committedly in the

kitchen.

Before the presentation of the staff award, the Director commented that everyone had worked so hard this past year that the award should be given jointly to the whole team.

The choice of runners-up was a recognition that outstanding service on the front line relies on outstanding service in the back office. So the two people who ensure that our Administration and Finance run smoothly were recognised: **Errold Victor** and **Leanne Banks**.

There were two winners for the Staff award. First was one of our cleaners, **Thandi Mdialose**. She had been really noticed by people in the building for her lovely smile, her warm personality and her hard work. She said that she loves what she does because it is important for the DHC to offer a clean environment for everyone who comes here.

The second winner was **Paul Radebe** who took on the role as resident caretaker and then found himself sharing the building for 4 months with 100 sick, elderly and disabled homeless men and other staff members who were living in. But our 'gentle giant' kept a smile on his face and kept other people smiling.

Congratulations to them all!

The award-winners and runners-up (L to R): Geetha and Jayan Pillay, Paul Radebe, Errold Victor, Leanne Banks, Michaela Naicker, Thandi Mdialose. (Anivesh Singh was not able to be present).



DESTRUCTION AND VIOLENCE ONCE AGAIN IN DALTON

We were shocked to see, one day in February, 30 city officials move in on the community living in Dalton and start destroying their shacks and taking their belongings.

Dalton is a very poor community of up to 200 people living outside in the mud and 400 or so living in shacks inside the old Beer Hall. For 6 years, we have been working closely with the community; and for 4 years we have had a nearly daily presence on-site through our container clinic and pre-school.

After years of frustration we thought we were making progress. One part of the Municipality (SDB – the South Durban Basin part of 'Area Based Management') has been working closely with us. They helped us set up the containers for the clinic and the crèche. And though, after almost 4 years, these still do not have running water, SDB did

finally install ablution blocks on the site for residents. We have had an on-going problem with sewerage, rain water and waste management – none of these problems have been solved but at least SDB was talking to Municipal departments, to us and, importantly, to the community themselves to try and address these.

In fact, we had been invited to help mobilise the community in February for a clean-up campaign. But sadly another part of the Municipality decided to conduct a very different kind of 'clean up'!

They sent in 30 officials and Metro Police with three trucks. They smashed people's shacks and threw their meagre belongings into a waste truck. Two of our staff members were there to witness the incident and film it. We think that 100 people lost belongings including IDs and medicines. This is especially troubling when a key part of our role is to keep people healthy who have TB and HIV.

Speaking to eTV, one resident Wendy Magwaza said that, though this was not much, it had been her home for 8 years. Ryan van Rensburg, another resident explained that, had some notice been given, then at least he could have saved his belongings. But there was no notice and no explanation of the reason for the intervention.

Interestingly, similar incidents in Johannesburg and Pretoria (in 2018 and 2019) led to legal cases being brought against those Municipalities for failing to notify the residents in advance of the action that was being taken. The courts have taken a view that, even if there is a positive desired outcome, Government cannot take action against citizens which denies their human dignity.

Earlier last year, while protecting them during lockdown, some senior police officials told us that they had begun to view the homeless differently and understand their situation a bit more. Sadly, there was no sign of compassion or care in this latest incident at Dalton.

Metro Police and Municipal officials and trucks being deployed to destroy people's homes in Dalton.



ACKNOWLEDGING THE GOOD WORK OF BELINDA SCOTT

It has been announced that eThekweni Deputy Mayor, Belinda Scott, is stepping down from political life. So this is a good opportunity to thank her for what she has done to help the homeless in Durban.

Her association with the DHC goes back to when she was MEC for Finance for the Province of KZN and greatly admired Paddy Kearney. Then Premier, Zweli Mkhize (now of course the hardest working member of the national cabinet!) was keen to honour his mentor, Archbishop Hurley. With Belinda's help, he arranged for a major donation of R4.2M towards the construction costs of the centre, specifically for the Gandhi-Luthuli Peace Hall which Belinda opened alongside Ela Gandhi and Jane Ngobese (Luthuli's daughter) in 2015.

Belinda remained a regular attendee at our functions. By coincidence it was while at an event at the DHC – the blessing of the mobile clinic – that she received the news that she was to be made Deputy Mayor of eThekwin. In that new role, she worked even more closely with us, taking on responsibility for the Task Team on Homelessness (of which our Director was Chair).

She helped arrange for the naming of the street in front of our centre as 'Paddy Kearney Way' and she unveiled the plaque on the first anniversary of his death in November 2019.

Belinda's role was critical in leading the Municipality's project for the homeless during the hard lockdown (a year ago); unlike in other cities, in Durban local Government worked with NGOs and learnt from our collective experience to deliver the fastest and most effective response in the country.

Her commitment to the homeless has continued through a Municipally-funded shelter for women and children, and safe open sleeping spaces – both of them initiatives that we had identified years earlier but had been endlessly delayed under previous administrations. She has also shown a great openness to constructive responses to the drug crisis in her work with DUT's Urban Futures Centre and the Napier Centre 4 Healing.

Belinda is leaving public office but not leaving our city. She is taking up a new role with Urban Lime, the property company who helped us set up the Paper Money project and who assisted in refurbishing the women's shelter. We know that she shares, with Urban Lime and with us, a commitment to revitalising central Durban and making it a place which is welcoming for all our citizens, rich and poor. We wish her well.

In Nov 2019, Belinda Scott, then Deputy Mayor, unveiled Paddy Kearney Way.



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