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UPDATE

Care • Education • Community
Tel: 031 301 2240 www.denishurleycentre.org



Ukunakekela • Imfundo • Umphakathi
admin@denishurleycentre.org

October 2021

Dialogue between Politicians and Homeless Religious leaders welcome 2 new bishops Visits from Overseas Supporters Passing of Elizabeth Mkame



**Religious
leaders in
conversation**



**Prof Gini meets
Catholic
Business**



**Death of a
Patron and
friend**

HOMELESS VOTERS FACE THE PEOPLE WHO AIM TO RUN CITY HALL

The heat is building up for the South African local government elections which take place nationwide on Monday 1 November. And we are doing everything we can to ensure that the new city councils take seriously the needs of homeless people in their areas.

The DHC has been working with the National Homeless Network to develop and promote a National Homeless Manifesto. This sets out demands in five areas where local Municipalities have significant influence: Shelter, Sanitation, Healthcare, Security and Economic Empowerment. For each city, specific demands have been created and presented to the competing parties. We have challenged them to voice their support for these simple demands – or, if not, to explain why.

For the eThekweni elections – the Metropolitan area that includes Durban – we sent the Manifesto demands to the dozens of parties that are competing. At time of writing, three parties have responded reasonably positively (ADA, Al Jama-ah and Minority Front). But, disappointingly, most of the other small parties failed to prioritise a response to this.

The 6 leading parties competing in eThekweni were invited to come to the DHC to respond in person to the Manifesto and to speak directly to, and hear from, homeless voters. The session was chaired by Mazwi Xaba, KZN Managing Editor of Independent Media, who expressed admiration for this exercise in participatory democracy. Two of the parties who had promised to come (EFF and ATM) failed to pitch which suggests a lack of respect for the homeless community. The four who attended did listen as homeless bookseller, Mxolisi Mavimbela, presented the eThekweni section of the Manifesto.

In response, the ANC took credit for the good things they have done in office while not addressing the accusations by the room that they had failed in terms of providing security, houses and jobs. The DA and IFP drew unfavourable comparisons between the state of eThekweni and the situation in towns and cities where they have been in control. Action SA, 'the new kid on the block', presented itself as a party that was created by listening to the people. All the parties (except the ANC) drew attention to the 63 existing councillors (and the former Mayor) who are under investigation for fraud and corruption.

All the parties claimed they could be trusted – homeless voters can make their own judgements of whether the politicians will keep their promises. But the most important part of the meeting for them was that they felt they had been treated on a par with other voters. The event achieved extensive media coverage on television and in the national and local press.

Please join us in praying for safe and fair elections. If you wish, use the Christian prayers attached in English and Zulu.

A newspaper editor, 4 politicians and 2 empty chairs in front of a packed room of homeless voters. (Photo: Samora Chapman).

For more pictures see our Facebook page.

Samora's work (including photos he took for us during the COVID lockdown) is currently on display, alongside photographs by famed Struggle artist Cedric Nunn, at the Durban Art Gallery until 10 Nov).



INTERFAITH WELCOME FOR TWO NEW CHURCH LEADERS

Uniquely in the history of the Church in KZN, the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban and the Anglican Diocese of Natal have both received new bishops at the same time. The DHC had the great honour of hosting the two of them, to meet each other for the first time, and to meet other religious leaders from Durban.

We are building on almost 75 years of ecumenical co-operation between the two episcopal sees: Archbishop Hurley and Cardinal Napier both had excellent relations with their Anglican counterparts especially Archbishop Russell and Bishops Nuttall and Philip. In fact, 'father of the House', +Rubin, a Patron and former Trustee of the DHC, helped host the meeting and gave some background on the way in which religious leaders in Durban have been able to work together closely and to rely on each other for support. Three of our other Patrons – Ela Gandhi, AV Mahomed and Mike Vorster – were also

part of the meeting.

Archbishop Jwara, on his 3rd visit to the DHC in 2 months, shared the memory of growing up in the shadow of a mosque; so for him close relations with the Muslim community was not something new. He expressed excitement at the prospect of stepping into such a vibrant inter-faith community. Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe has been especially involved in relations between the Catholic and Anglican communities (as an African representative of the ARCIC process). He was 'coming home' to KZN and so knew, from first-hand experience, the importance of the local interfaith tradition.

One curious coincidence between the two men was that they had both taken up posts in rural dioceses 3 years ago, and expected to be there until retirement. So they were equally saddened to leave their posts and shocked to find themselves transported to the limelight of the 'top job' in KZN, called by the Holy Spirit (via Pope Francis in one case and via the Synod of Bishops in the other).

All those present expressed joy at being able to come together physically in one room after so many months of separation. And with several of the new generation of religious leaders present, there was a feeling that now is the time to revitalise this important part of Durban civil society.

*The Religious Leaders pose for a group picture with the two new bishops seated in the centre. Present at the meeting but not for the photograph were: Dr A V Mahomed (Jumma Masjid) and Rabbi Gilad Friedman (Umhlanga Jewish Centre).
(Photo: Shelley Kjonstad, Independent Media)*



LEADERSHIP TRAINING WITH SOME OF OUR PARTNERS

The DHC benefits from loyal supporters not just in Durban and wider South Africa but around the world. And the steady re-opening of international travel means that we can connect in person, once again, with some of our overseas supporters. For example, Izingane Happy Foundation, a Dutch NGO, has been supporting our Dalton crèche for the past few years: their representative Lonie Vles-Rosenmöller was able to visit us this week more than 2 years since her last visit.

A generous American supporter is Al Gini who for 51 years was a business professor at Loyola University Chicago. It was in that guise that he first learnt about the DHC while delivering the Jesuit Institute's winter lecture tour in 2014. Again, after an enforced absence, he was delighted to be back in South Africa and to see what progress we had made.

His visit meant we could offer his expertise to three organisations who have been great partners of the DHC. SPAR Supermarkets, whose national head office is in Durban, have frequently helped us with donations of food and toiletries. We had the chance to thank their senior management in person when Prof Gini delivered a lecture to them on the 'Three Qualities of Leadership': Character, Stewardship and Experience. He addressed a packed room and entertained them with his many 'war stories' from the American worlds of business and politics

A version of the same talk (which can be viewed [here](#)) was given to the KZN Catholic Business Forum (whose Steering Committee is pictured above). This group was launched just before COVID and Prof Gini's visit gave them a chance to re-launch with an in-person seminar. It was held in the Hurley Room, at the newly re-named Napier Conference Centre, in the presence of +Jwara: three archbishops of Durban remembered in one place! Prof Gini started with a quote from the great African theologian St Augustine: "the job of the leader is to serve the well-being of those they lead."

Prof Gini argues we can learn not just from good leaders but from bad ones. After all, as he pointed out, having had Trump as President meant that as an American he was not short of material on the subject of leadership. So it was the lessons of bad leadership (or mis-leadership) which were his focus when addressing a group of Jesuit priests from across Africa who are undergoing a 'tertianship' experience just outside Durban. A few days before, we were pleased to welcome this same group for a tour of the Denis Hurley Centre and the Jumma Masjid – and introduce them to the delights of the Durban bunny chow.

Max Oliva, KZN Managing Director of SPAR Group, thanks Prof Al Gini at the end of his talk at the Phoenix Distribution Centre. (Photo:Val Adamson)



A FIRST VISIT BY THE NEW IRISH AMBASSADOR

As well as individuals overseas, we have also benefited over the years from extensive support from foreign embassies. Our mobile clinic was funded by the Japanese Government and our computer room by the Polish Embassy.

Through US-AID and PEPFAR, the American Government have been generous donors especially for our work with highly marginalised communities affected by HIV/ AIDS. Despite the constrictions of COVID, we have been able to engage with the new US Consul General in Durban, Anne Linee. We have enjoyed close connections with her two immediate predecessors and are pleased that that has continued with her and the current US Consulate team.

Given the heritage of both Denis Eugene Hurley and Gerald Paddy Kearney, we would hope to have good links with the Irish people and we have. The former Ambassador, Liam MacGabhann, would regularly include a stop-in at the DHC on his trips to Durban. In fact, one of his last official visits before he left in October 2018 was to the Face-to-Face project in our café. The Irish Embassy had helped fund this as part of their commitment to empowering people with disabilities.

It was fitting therefore that we had the chance to offer a cup of tea in the café to the new Irish Ambassador, on her first visit to Durban. Fionnuala Gilsenan was keen to hear about the Irish roots of the Catholic community in Durban, and see how +Hurley and Paddy – and generations of Irish nuns – have inspired the work of the Denis Hurley

Centre. We explained to her that sadly, the programme of training deaf young adults in catering skills was one of the few parts of our work that has not survived COVID. But we also stressed that we are keenly exploring ways in which we could reactivate that space.

The Ambassador was particularly impressed by our kitchen and how we have continued providing over 14,000 meals each month through the varying degrees of lockdown restrictions. She was very interested to hear how we have advocated for, and achieved access to, COVID vaccinations for the undocumented (local and foreign nationals). And she loved our Hurley museum, in particular the panels which document the life of the Archbishop alongside national and world events.

Left to Right: DHC Administrator (Leanne Banks) and our Social Worker (Sr Cathy Murugan) serve tea to her Excellency, Ambassador Gilsenan.



DEATH OF A PATRON AND A DEAR FRIEND

When in 1976, Archbishop Hurley appointed the then 34-year-old Paddy Kearney to create an ecumenical agency for social action, the first person to join his team was Elizabeth Mkame. Known to everyone as Ma'Liz, she brought to the new organisation her skills as a legal secretary and the passion for development that she had acquired by working with the YWCA. Through her work at Diakonia – later Diakonia Council of Churches – she was able to establish at least 14 community resource centres in the Durban region to provide people with assistance in navigating legal matters.

Liz also served on the boards of a number of organisations devoted to helping local communities including Ithala Bank, Pinetown & Highway Child & Welfare, SACBC Siyabhabha and Ingonyama Trusts. With a group of prominent women in the Clermont area where she lived, she was able to establish several NGOs who shared her dedication to uplifting the community and helping those in need. For over 50 years she was a member of the Catholic Women's League and, as an African Regional representative to the Vatican, met Pope St John Paul on several occasions.

When the DHC was created, Paddy honoured her by inviting her to be a Patron alongside other important local religious leaders and she regularly attended our events until old age made it too difficult. She is survived by four children, 13 grand-children and 3 great-grandchildren. We give thanks to God for the dedication of her life to serving others and for the inspiration she has been to so many women who want to make a difference in their communities.

From the Archives: some of the earliest members of the Diakonia team, with Ma'Liz standing third from the left.



Director: Raymond Perrier (raymond@denishurleycentre.org)
Bookings: Jean-Marie Ntamubano (jean-marie@denishurleycentre.org)
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