

If you cannot see the pictures, use the right-hand mouse click and select 'Download pictures'. If you are still having problems, [email us](#)

You are receiving this information about the Denis Hurley Centre because you have shown an interest in the work done by us or one of our partners. We hope that you will enjoy receiving this monthly update. If you have any comments please [email us](#).

If you do not want to receive emails from us, scroll to the end for information about unsubscribing and also our obligations under the POPI Act. If you would like to recommend us to anyone you know please [send us their](#) email address if they consent.



UPDATE

Care • Education • Community
Ukunakekela • Imfundo • Umphakathi
www.denisHurleycentre.org



March 2025

Eid Mubarak to our Muslim readers
and continued Lenten Blessings to Christians

Much Fun at a Jazzy Sunday Afternoon
Ways of connecting with Lent
Marking Ramadan with our Neighbours
5 years on - Memories of COVID



Offering Ashes at Prayer at sunset **A COVID Easter**
the start of Lent **to break the fast** **five years ago**

HUNDREDS GATHER TO CELEBRATE A JAZZY AFTERNOON

The month started in wonderful style with a Jazzy Afternoon that was generously hosted by the Durban Jewish Club. It was almost exactly five years since we had last been in that venue and, on that occasion, we were celebrating our Trustee and Patron, Mgr Paul Nadal on the 60th anniversary of his priesthood. Only a few weeks after that event, we were in lockdown and less than a year later Mgr Paul passed away, so that event had mixed memories for us.

This year's event was an afternoon of unalloyed joy. We had a full capacity audience, despite the huge storm that swept through Durban a few hours earlier and prevented some of our guests from getting through. Included in the audience were 40 residents of

nearby TAFTA old-age homes, present thanks to the generous sponsorship of donors who wanted to support us but could not be there.

Everyone was thoroughly entertained by our old friends Melvin Peters (on keyboard) and George and Debbie Mari (trumpet and voice). They were joined by Thuto Motseme (bass), Leroy Khumalo (drums) and Johann van Molen (saxophone). They played a mixture of old American standards, popular South African jazz songs and compositions by George Mari himself. A surprise appearance was made by our Director, Raymond Perrier, singing a topicalised version of the Gershwins' "I got Rhythm".

Another special appearance was from the Prep choir of St Henry's Marist College under Romi Schumann (*pictured below*). The two dozen children had the thrill of playing with a professional jazz band and they gave a rousing rendition of "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing". We feel sure that we have some jazz performers in the making.

Sadly, the junior choir of Fatima Dominican Convent School were unable to join because of the storm. But they did make good on their promise to deliver 300 pancakes. Instead of being used at the concert, these were served to our homeless guests on Shrove Tuesday, a few days later – so they also got to share in the fun.

Many thanks to the musicians for giving their time, to Brandon Bunyan and Black Coffee for supplying technical support, and the Friends of Music Society for graciously permitting use of their magnificent piano. And extra thanks to the Islamic Medical Association who donated the electronic thermometers that we were able to give away as gifts; and to Copper Chimney who provided delicious food for the musicians and backstage staff. A truly interfaith effort - as you would expect from the DHC!

A coffee station and tombola helped to boost the fundraising and, after covering some small costs and having to pay back VAT(!), we recouped almost R50,000 on the afternoon. Many thanks to all who supported us; watch this space for further fundraising concerts to follow later in the year.



ENTERING INTO THE SPIRIT OF LENT

The concert was intentionally timed to be on the last weekend before Lent – a chance to have fun and indulge before entering into this solemn period of the Church's year. The 40 days that lead up to Easter remind Christians of the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert, and help us prepare for the intensity of Holy Week.

The traditional way of marking the start of Lent is by receiving ashes on one's forehead: a sign of a personal commitment to conversion during this time. As we do each year, we were pleased to offer ashes to anyone in our lunch queue who wanted to receive them on Ash Wednesday. They were distributed by two Jesuit priests who were at the very end of their period of volunteering with us at the DHC and also at Emmanuel Cathedral. One of them, Fr Rob Morris (*pictured at the top*) was a New Zealander who is usually working at the Jesuit retreat house on a wine estate in South Australia. The other, Fr Rajah Arockia will soon be returning to the school in Pune, India where he is

principal. Before leaving he wrote a beautiful [reflection on Lent for The Post newspaper](#).

Staff members were also invited to receive ashes at our weekly prayers on Ash Wednesday morning. Later in the month about 30 of us, including long-term volunteers and interns, spent a half-day in Lenten reflection at St Francis Xavier Church on the Bluff. It was lovely to be there since this is a Catholic parish that has supported us from the very beginning and has frequently sent groups of volunteers to us, so we were pleased to be able to reciprocate the visit.

The reflection was led by Pauline Rosseau, former principal of Maris Stella School, and now training as an Ignatian Spiritual Director. She took as her theme the slogan of the Jubilee year 'Pilgrims of Hope' and gave us a chance to reflect on how we were being called to be pilgrims of hope this year and bring hope to those around us – as individuals and as an organisation. One of the forms of reflection was an opportunity to draw what our personal pilgrimage looked like and elicited some fascinating responses.

We were further able to share our Lenten journey when we had the privilege of leading the monthly on-line Litany of the Community of the Cross of Nails. Prof. Betty Govinden, an old friend of the DHC, assisted us in this and we were able to share images and stories from the DHC with people around the world connecting with the themes of peace and reconciliation.

Photo: DHC staff, interns and some of our volunteers showing their drawings of pilgrimage journeys at the end of our Lenten retreat. Pauline Rosseau, our facilitator, is in black in the second row.



INTERFAITH IFTAR AT THE DHC

Peace and reconciliation continued as important themes when over 60 people gathered at the DHC to share an interfaith iftar. As we have done every year since we opened, we take one day during Ramadan where we join with our neighbours from the Grey Street Mosque and IPCI in breaking the fast as the sun sets. Being able to hear the *adhan* (the call to prayer) live from the mosque next door makes this particularly special.

Dr AV Mahomed, Chair of the Mosque and a Patron of the DHC, led us in a sharing about Ramadan. It was interesting for those present to see what similarities there were with the Christian ways of marking Lent, the upcoming Jewish Passover, and the Hindu festival of Holi which had just finished. We were especially honoured that a number of religious leaders were present including Bishop Rubin Phillip from the Anglican diocese, Rev Mike Vorster of the Methodist Church, Ela Gandhi from the Hindu community and Rabbi Gilad Friedman of the Umhlanga Jewish Centre. The US Consul General in Durban, Hon. Josie Ratcliffe, was also present with members of her team.

Kogie Moodley from the KZN International Business Association posted a lovely reflection on the event on Facebook. She said:

“It was truly a night of unity in humanity, an evening where hearts from all walks of life came together in mutual respect and understanding. Your efforts reflect the very essence of compassion and harmony. May God's blessings be upon you all.

“Moments like these remind us of the power of community, love, and shared purpose. May we continue to embrace the spirit of kindness, cherishing the love and respect that unite us. Ameen.

“What an extraordinary and unimaginable moment this was, especially in these times of global uncertainty. This sacred occasion stood as a powerful testament to forgiveness, love, and unity—a reminder of the beauty found in understanding and coexistence. I was blessed to have been invited to share such energies.

“Now, I urge leaders across South Africa and beyond to take inspiration from this extraordinary gathering and spark movements of love, forgiveness, and peace. Let us break down the barriers of segregation—be it black, white, Hindu, halaal, Christian or Jew—and come together, one human to another. This is a call for us to stand united in diversity, and to work towards a brighter, more harmonious world.

“I ask you all to join me in this mission. Like and share this message to amplify its reach and inspire others. Let us say no to division and yes to unification, spreading this message of hope across our country and the world. Together, we can build bridges of compassion and understanding, ensuring the legacy of unity lives on for generations to come.”

Expressing a similar note, Ravi Pillay, who in his time as an MEC (local minister) in KZN has been a keen supporter of ours, expressed thanks to the DHC for ‘keeping the flame of hope alive’ over the past 10 years, even as other flames have been snuffed out around us.

A reflection by our Director on the importance of this annual event [can be read here](#).

Photo: Sharing by all present - religious leaders and members of different communities - in a circle to reinforce our sense of unity and common purpose.



THINKING BACK TO LOCKDOWN FIVE YEARS AGO

It is interesting how the need for hope has recurred in much of our work recently. That is not surprising given some of the political changes happening internationally, and the impact that these are having on South Africa.

Many have been asking if we are affected by the threatened cancellation of US AID funding. We have received money from that source in the past, and had been very hopeful that we would do so this year but that is now very unlikely. Moreover, we are conscious that there are NGOs in Durban who are unlikely to survive this period of turmoil; that will only add to the number of people turning to the DHC for assistance. We are hopeful that donors like you who have supported our clinic in the past will continue to do so – individuals, faith groups, trusts and corporates – and that the life-saving services that we offer, especially for people affected by TB and HIV will continue at the same level.

This sense of uncertainty and anxiety, coupled with the unwavering motivation to respond to those in need, reminds us of an even worse time five years ago.

Like the rest of the world, we were faced with the trauma of the COVID pandemic and were just entering into the unknown of a lockdown. The South African version was due to last three weeks but in the end lasted four months, followed by repeat appearances of semi-lockdowns thereafter. In addition, we had the extra challenge of working with Government departments who struggle to provide services even during good times, and the additional stress (for some) of an embargo on the sale of cigarettes and alcohol!

But in many ways, COVID was an opportunity for the DHC to prove why we exist and why we need to continue to exist. To recap some of what we were able to do:

- Through the National Homeless Network, we lobbied to make sure that homeless people were not forgotten – and indeed they were mentioned in the President's very first televised 'pandemic family meeting'.
- In three days, we worked with local Government and a network of NGOs and businesses to create emergency shelters for 1,500 homeless people in central Durban
- We helped co-ordinate the response of religious communities especially in feeding 1,500 people: at one stage, we had Christians providing breakfast,

Hindus lunch, Muslims supper – and the Jewish Club serving refreshments for all the workers

- We were able to provide interfaith chaplains, newspapers, books and sports equipment to the emergency shelters
- When City Health was busy with the rest of the community, we were able to provide healthcare so that the homeless were not only kept safe from COVID but also kept healthy in the face of HIV, TB, and all the daily ailments that weaken them
- The DHC itself became the residence for 100 disabled, elderly and sick homeless men and our team served them 24/7 for four months
- When Holy Week occurred in the middle of lockdown, we worked with Fr Sabelo Mkhize at the Cathedral to provide a most moving and unusual Triduum for our residents (*see photo at the top*)
- After lockdown, we were able to secure grants and family reunification for many of those who were staying with us so they did not return to the streets
- We were able to mobilise artists, musicians, writers, film-makers and photographers to support our work and to use this opportunity to help draw people closer to the homeless community (for example, [this photo essay in the Daily Maverick](#))
- We kept our Street Lit booksellers solvent through creative on-line alternatives, when they were unable to sell on the streets
- We co-ordinated a joint appeal which raised R1.6 million in a few weeks that was fairly and independently distributed among the various NGOs who were working to support the homeless
- We lobbied successfully for a change in the rules regarding the COVID vaccine rollout so that homeless people and refugees who did not have the right paperwork could still access the vaccine

All of this was possible because of the resourcefulness, flexibility and resilience of our staff and the extra volunteers who came and helped. We were pleased that there were many more Government officials than usual who were willing to work with us and who showed they cared about the marginalised. We were especially pleased to demonstrate, yet again, that faith communities working together can bring hope in times of despair.

And we remain grateful to our loyal donors who saw then – and see now – the need to bolster the finances of the DHC so that we are able to respond not just to extraordinary crisis of COVID, but also to the ‘ordinary crises’ that we see every day in central Durban.

Photo: Fr Denardo Gnanapragas pictured at one of the tented shelters: he was among the team of interfaith chaplains that we assembled to support homeless people during lockdown.



Director: Raymond Perrier (raymond@denishurleycentre.org)

Bookings: Leanne Banks (leanne@denishurleycentre.org)

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

In accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (4 of 2013) please be aware:

- you can remove yourself from this list at any time by clicking unsubscribe below
- you can request to see what information we are holding about you by contacting Leanne Banks (leanne@denishurleycentre.org)
- by responding to this communication, you are consenting to us processing and using any personal information provided

Sent by
{{ contact.SendinBlue }}

You received this email because you are registered with DenisHurleyCentre

[Unsubscribe here](#)



© 2016 DenisHurleyCentre