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**November 2025**

*Advent blessings as we prepare for Christmas*

**Homeless Conversation in Cape Town**  
**UK news and a great time to donate**  
**Honouring our Departed**  
**Fun times raising Funds**



**UK donations doubled next week**



**Mass to remember and give thanks**



**What kind of nun-sense is this?**

## **HOMELESS PEOPLE AND ALLIES TAKE OVER CITY HALL**

We often complain that the homeless are pushed to the margins of society. In a dramatic counter to this, the 9<sup>th</sup> National Homeless Conversation took place in the very centre of Government in the Mother City – the grand edifice that is Cape Town City Hall.

This was possible because Cape Town's large network of homeless NGOs partnered with the Municipality to run the 'Conversation' and use of this prestigious venue was offered. This is the same building where Nelson Mandela made his first speech after his release from prison in 1990. It was so moving to think that in the place where Mandela was seen by the world after 27 years of being invisible, the invisible homeless people of South Africa were speaking and being spoken about.

This was the first time that the annual meeting was taking place in person in Cape Town. Inevitably, costs of travel reduced the number who could attend from around the country (though we are grateful to Intercape for providing free bus travel for some). But we did have 43 people from five provinces beyond the Western Cape – including 13 from KZN and, for the first time, five from the Eastern Cape. In addition, over 380 people attended from Cape Town itself – including many homeless people, NGO workers and Government employees. (Sadly, no one from eThekweni Municipality or KZN Province took up the invitation).

This was a unique opportunity to learn from each other and there were over 35 inputs: a mix of presentations, testimonies, workshops and panels. Participants could choose to follow one of a number of tracks: Partnership, Psycho-social support, Healthcare and Addiction, Accommodation and Sustainable Income. 67 different people were involved in giving inputs of whom 21 were people with a lived experience of homelessness.

Most of the presentations were filmed and the slides and the videos will soon be available on line. A link will be sent in due course to all who registered; if you were not there but would like to access the material, [email the National Homeless Network](#).

The partnership between civil society and local Government was very evident and this culminated in a ceremony in which the US's Institute for Global Homelessness (IGH) honoured Cape Town as a 'Vanguard City'. This is a recognition both of what has already been achieved and also the shared commitment to make more progress in the future (and measure the results). Whilst Cape Town is not perfect, it was striking how different the situation there is from five years ago (during COVID) when there was no co-operation and the Municipality imposed ill-conceived solutions that did not work and wasted money.

It was, for example, interesting to hear that the Mother City is investing over R100 million (\$5.8M) to create 1,000 additional beds for the homeless, distributed across a number of small sites, and in places where homeless people already live. This contrasts with the plan that eThekweni has, also to create 1,000 beds - but 37km from the city centre, after zero consultation, and on which they are spending R14 million (\$0.8M). (Of course, it is possible that eThekweni is just very efficient. But the news that they have spent R22 million (\$1.3M) on two statues to adorn the beachfront suggests that the amount being spent on the homeless says more about the Municipality's priorities than its cost-efficiencies!).

On the day before the Conversation, and again the day after, delegates had the opportunity to visit different shelters, work projects and drop-in centres in various parts of the city. (Unlike Durban, homeless people in Cape Town are not just concentrated in the CBD and so services are provided in different hubs around the centre and suburbs).

With thanks to the producers, there was also a special screening of *God's Work*, the feature film that was inspired by the DHC.

The experience of those who attended from Durban is summed up in these words from Illa who runs our Street Lit programme: "It was brilliant to see the collaboration. But also heartbreaking. This is an almost unimaginable scenario for so many other regions – Durban included. It reminds us of the huge and frustrating disconnect between the various role players which inhibits us all from achieving what is necessary. Just think what we could get done if only we worked together!"

*Photo: It was inspiring to see the logo of the National Homeless Network hanging on banners outside Cape Town City Hall, either side of the statue of Nelson Mandela.*



## A BLACK FRIDAY DEAL FROM THE DHC?

While our newspapers and social media are full of adverts tempting us to buy things we do not need, we can offer you a 'Black Friday' deal that counters the consumerism and will make a genuine impact on the lives of the poor. To be fair, it actually starts not on Friday, but next Tuesday, but it is still a chance to get something for nothing.

If you have friends or family in the UK and you want to encourage them to support the DHC, then this is the moment. For 7 days, between 12 noon (UK time) next Tues 2 Dec and 12 noon on Tues 9 Dec, donations to our sister organisation, the Denis Hurley Association in the UK, will be DOUBLED if they are made via 'The Big Give'. That means, with Gift Aid included, that a donation of £20 will become a contribution to our work of £45! That is almost R1,000 (\$60) – enough for the clinic at the DHC to provide life-saving healthcare to 10 patients. Not bad for the cost of a few cappuccinos! So please send this link to people you know in the UK who might be keen to support us: [tinyurl.com/HurleyBigGive](https://tinyurl.com/HurleyBigGive).

The Denis Hurley Association has for 12 years been supporting the DHC and raising awareness of the plight of homeless people and refugees in Durban. During a recent visit to the UK our Director, together with the Chair of the DHA, was able to meet one of our UK Patrons, the Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham. +Bernard Longley had heard about the vigilante protests in Durban and expressed relief that the DHC was still able to respond to the healthcare needs of foreign nationals. He pointed out that such xenophobia was growing in the UK as well, and that the Church had a clear role to promote the inclusive values of the Gospel. He was delighted to receive a copy of the book about Paddy Kearney – whom he had met and been impressed by on a visit to Durban in 2004.

Our Director also had the opportunity to make presentations to a Catholic primary school in Birmingham and also an Anglican one. At St Martin de Porres, there were inspiring statements on the walls of the school hall quoting from Catholic Social Teaching. So he was able to show how the DHC puts this into action and help the children reflect on how they can act in their own communities. Interestingly, in both schools there were a number of Muslim learners present – this community makes up 30% of the population of the city. So he highlighted the way in which the DHC works closely with our own Muslim neighbours – and indeed with all faiths – to serve the poor. He explained proudly that we are the only building in the world named after a Catholic Archbishop that houses a *halal* kitchen.

The children and staff in both schools committed to do some fundraising for the DHC – and to remember us in their prayers.

*Photo: Our Director with the Principal and some learners from Moseley Church of England Primary School.*



## **REMEMBERING THE DEPARTED - THROUGH A MASS AND A LECTURE**

November is a traditional month to remember those who have passed. Our own founder, Paddy Kearney, died 7 years ago this week (on 23 Nov 2018) and Archbishop Hurley was born 110 years ago on 9 November 1915.

Fr Nkazimulo Shange, who is the Acting Administrator at Emmanuel Cathedral, celebrated the Annual Memorial Mass at the DHC to pray for our 'faithful departed': donors, partners, volunteers and service-users who have gone to the Lord (*photo at the top*). Especially remembered at this Mass are people who have left money to the DHC in their wills. We commit to invest the funds and only spend the interest; that means that these gifts can continue to be a legacy for many years to come. Please [contact us](#) if you want to find out more about this 'Paddy Kearney Legacy Fund'.

Another traditional way of honouring someone is through a memorial lecture. So it is fitting that the annual Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace lecture is in honour of Archbishop Hurley and also now of Archbishop Abel Gaba (who died at the beginning of COVID). Both of them, in their times, had been the Catholic bishop for the SACBC who led on Justice & Peace.

Kalie Senyane, the J&P co-ordinator organised the event at Trinity Church Musgrave.

Fr Julian Davey, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, welcomed this year's guest speaker, the celebrated Prof Salim Abdool Karim. With his wife Dr Quarraisha, he runs CAPRISA, a world-renowned Durban-based centre for research into HIV/ AIDS. He was one of the key experts advising the South African government during COVID and he took as his theme the need to counter disinformation. He drew on examples, from the US and SA, of how disinformation has been fuelled by people's fears during the pandemic, by political polarisation, and by the rise of social media.

"If it's too good to be true, it's because it's not true" he pointed out – but people regularly fall for promises from politicians or for miracle cures touted by social media.

This situation, he warned, is getting worse with the rise of specific attacks on truth-sayers, both by politicians with a hidden agenda and by tech companies who make

money from people's confusion. His recent book 'Standing Up for Science' reminds us of the importance of genuine expertise and the danger of 'the University of You Tube'!

Prof Abdool Karim has been helping us to combat the xenophobic protests at Addington Hospital and he pointed to this as another example of disinformation. While the protesters claim they are blocking 'illegal migrants' (which the Professor pointed out is already a bogus term), in reality their actions have affected a much larger group of *documented* foreigners and un-documented *South Africans*. (And sadly the problems have continued, with little intervention by the police, even after a Johannesburg court declared earlier this month that such blockades are illegal).

Noting the rise in such xenophobia, and the silence of some parties in criticising it, he quoted Pope Leo's recent comment: "Someone who says, 'I'm against abortion but I'm in agreement with the inhumane treatment of immigrants in the United States': I don't know if that's pro-life."

After the lecture, the Professor answered a range of questions especially about COVID, vaccines and future pandemics. The audience was impressed not only by the depth of his knowledge but also his skill at explaining complex science to laypeople. In his vote of thanks, Bishop Elias Zondi pointed out that Archbishop Jwara has chosen as his motto 'The Truth will set you free' (Jn 8:32). He said that, listening to the Professor, he had been shocked to hear of the ways in which people distort the truth to oppress others.

The closing quotation from the lecture is one which can resonate for all of us and was from Archbishop Hurley himself: "Freedom and rights belong to people not because they have already attained the truth, but in order that they might reach it."

The slides from the lecture are attached; a report on the event [can be read here](#).

*Photo (Rafs Mayet): Prof Abdool Karim giving the 2025 Hurley-Gabuza J&P Lecture.*



## **A FEW OF OUR FAVOURITE THINGS - AND FAVOURITE PEOPLE**

Whilst we always need to raise funds for the DHC, it is great if we can have a FUNdraiser which brings people together for a memorable experience. We did just that, thanks to support from the Rhumbelow Theatre, with our recent screening of the 'Sound of Music'.

Celebrating 60 years since its release, this film continues to be a firm family favourite and now we discover it is a papal favourite too: Leo XIV named it recently as one of his most loved films. It is hardly surprising since the story is uplifting, the songs so

memorable and the scenery breathtaking. And it was the perfect film for an organisation like ours which works with nuns and refugees and, thanks to the churches and music groups that hire our halls, often resonates to the sound of music.

What made this screening extra special was that it was a Sing-Along, with the words shown at the bottom of the screen – and all 120 people present delighted in the opportunity to deliver ‘Edelweiss’ or ‘Do Re Mi’. Many also dressed up in the spirit of the film, some more tangentially than others. The compere for the afternoon was our director dressed entirely in yellow and gold – he was ‘Ray – a drop of golden sun’!

We had three categories of prizes for the fancy dress. Among the women we had a crop of ‘Marias’, and the prize was won by Sarah Gedye (*see photo below*). Only one man stepped up for the competition and that was Dr Ockert Fourie who came as a brown paper package tied up with string (together with warm woollen mittens and blue satin sashes). And the group category was hotly contested by competing ‘murmurs’ of nuns, a set of friends dressed in an assortment of curtains, and a family von Trapp. It was a group from PMB who won the prize, helped by the fact that their local school had recently put on a production of ‘Sister Act’! The judges, by the way, were the Holy Family Sisters – the only real nuns present. Though they may not have dressed like nuns, they certainly behaved more demurely than those who actually wore the veils and habits.

Amidst all the fun, some serious fundraising took place: between donations and raffle tickets, we raised over R33,000 (\$2,000). That is an immense achievement and it spurs us on to organise our next Sing-Along screening (please note in your diary): it will be ‘Mama Mia’ on Sunday 17 May. (Curiously, this did not make it into the Pope’s top films!).

From the other side of the world, we are also pleased to report on the success of Phil Perrier’s fundraising in Chelmsford UK. Earlier in the year, her tombola at the four Catholic churches raised R18,000 (\$1,000) and her recent Indian takeaways raised a further R25,000 (\$1,500). Not bad for a woman who is almost 87! She will be hosting an Indian fundraising dinner in Durban on Saturday 10 January – [email for more details](#).

The work of the DHC is possible because of such fundraising activities and even more so because of donations from individuals, local businesses and grant-makers. Sadly, the regular donations from churches and other faith communities on which we used to rely have almost completely dried up. Moreover, we get no cash at all from Government at any level.

So we hope that, as you consider your spend over Christmas, or contemplate what to do with a year-end bonus, you will include [a thought for the DHC](#) and the homeless people and refugees we serve. You can for example make a donation in the name of a friend or family member and we will [email you a personalised Christmas card](#), wherever you are in the world, that you can send them. For the first time ever, we are likely to end this year with a deficit of over R500,000 (\$29,000) – the needs get greater each year, and our income has to keep pace if we are to carry on fulfilling our dream.

But as the Mother Abbess sang, it is “A dream that will need all the love you can give/ Ev’ry day of your life for as long as you live.”



Director: Raymond Perrier ([raymond@denishurleycentre.org](mailto:raymond@denishurleycentre.org) )

Bookings: Leanne Banks ([leanne@denishurleycentre.org](mailto: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](http://www.denishurleycentre.org)

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