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March 2026

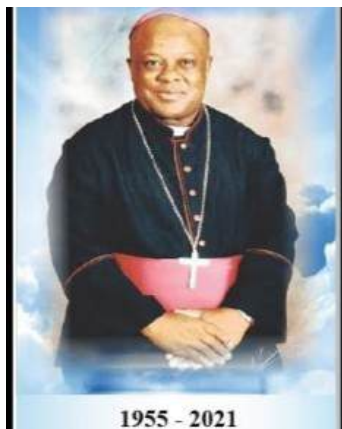
***Blessings to readers observing
Holy Week and Passover***

Update on victims of violence

Plea for funds to respond to xenophobia

Shared Iftaar with our Muslim neighbours

Pausing to reflect during Lent



**Gratitude to late
Abel Gabuza,
RC Archbishop**



**Wisdom shared
by Anglican
Dean from UK**



**Methodist
Minister helps
us to reflect**

UPDATE ON THE ASSAULTS ON HOMELESS PEOPLE

Sadly, we do not have conclusive results to report back about this matter. But we want to reassure our supporters (and our beneficiaries) that we are not giving up in our fight for justice.

Since December we have been reporting how many homeless men in central Durban have claimed that they were viciously attacked by Ensure Security, a private firm engaged by eThekweni our local Municipality and funded by rate-payers. We were concerned about this and raised it directly with the Mayor in mid-December. Our anxieties were confirmed when a video came into our possession that clearly shows a man being repeatedly beaten by several Ensure personnel and then driven away. It is now 14 weeks since that incident and we have not found the person who was assaulted in the video. Despite attempts by Ensure Security to prevent the video being made public, it is [still available to watch](#) – and makes for harrowing viewing.

We are pleased that the Navi Pillay Research Group at the School of Law at UKZN have come alongside us in raising complaints about this illegal violence. Judge Navi is the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and, as a Patron of the DHC, wrote a very moving [opinion piece](#) for the recent South African 'Human Rights Day' about how much work we still need to do as a nation to fulfil the promises of our rights-based Constitution. She especially raised the point that Government officials have a duty to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights.” This is a *positive* duty which means that it is not enough for them *not* to do things that infringe rights – they need to show that they have taken actions to ensure that rights are enjoyed by everyone.

It is very disappointing, therefore, that criminal investigation against the perpetrators of the violence has been so slow in starting. Both the Municipality and SAPS (the national police service) have had possession of the video since early February and yet they did nothing to ensure that an investigation was begun, even though they had clear evidence of a serious crime. The excuse repeatedly used was that only the victim could open the case – which is clearly untrue and absurd; we fear it was a smokescreen to avoid taking action. A case has now been opened by the DHC – not an easy task – and yet we have still seen no evidence that any investigation has actually started.

eThekweni Municipality claimed to have conducted their own investigation but this amounted to little more than accepting at face value the explanation from Ensure Security. Moreover, they continue to employ Ensure and have imposed no sanctions. Since Ensure are the agents of eThekweni, both the company and the Municipality have a duty to report the crime to the police – as any organisation does if their employees commit a crime during working hours. The Municipality's failure to do so, and their on-going lacklustre approach to holding Ensure Security accountability, puts them at risk of being vicariously liable for the crime committed.

What is more, this is not a one-off incident: we had multiple reports of violence from before this video and since the video. Then, the very week that eThekweni were claiming to us that Ensure had taken steps to prevent such incidents, another patient presented himself at our clinic claiming that he had been beaten up by Ensure, with clear wounds and bruises to show.

Ultimately, responsibility for this lies with the City Manager and we urge supporters who share our indignation [to write to him](#). We also hope that some of the well-known local corporates whom Ensure Security claim as clients – such as Spar, Shree Prop, MSC and Bluff Meat Supply – will want to know why their contractor has not acted to make

sure that their staff face criminal responsibility for breaking the law.

As Navi Pillay reminds us: if we do not protect the rights of the most vulnerable, we should not be surprised if later it is our own rights that are infringed.

Photo: Recent photographs of a homeless man who claims he was beaten by Ensure Security. We hope that the investigation that was finally opened at Durban Central police station will put an end to this violence.



ON-GOING IMPACT OF ILLEGAL XENOPHOBIC PROTESTS

If it seems as if we are returning in this newsletter to 'old news', it is because the problems have not gone away. One of the ways for injustice to continue is for those who perpetrate it to just keep on, while the attention of those who might oppose them gets distracted by newer news.

Our Constitution, as explained above, places a positive duty on those who are part of Government to ensure that rights are upheld. eThekweni and SAPS have failed to act in relation to the violence against the homeless. The on-going problem of patients being blocked at Government hospitals is a similar example: in this case the failure to act lies again with SAPS and also the Department of Health. It is even more shocking since they were instructed by a court in December to intervene and have still failed to do so.

We are grateful to colleagues in Johannesburg who have successfully taken this issue up with the courts and are now again pushing for action [as reported in 'Ground Up'](#) this week.

Meantime, patients continue to suffer. And – to remind readers – it is not only 'illegal foreigners' who are being blocked (as claimed by the protesters) but also legal migrants with visas, work permits and permanent residence, SA-born children of migrants, and

South Africans who do not have their ID with them.

Since we are on the front line in providing healthcare to such communities, we see the impact of this every week in our clinic. We reported before how the number of foreign patients we see has shot up since the protests started in July of last year. From a monthly average of about 250 consultations with that group, we went up to 550 pm in the third quarter of 2025 and 730 pm in the fourth quarter. The December court ruling has had no impact from our perspective, with over 700 consultations with foreign national patients every month so far this year.

What is more the money we need to spend on medicines has shot up. That is because, as reported before, many patients who were collecting chronic medication from Government facilities are now forced to turn to us to address their diabetes, asthma, hypertension, epilepsy and cardiac problems. In addition there is now a hiccup in the provision of regular medication, ARVs and TB treatments from the Department of Health even though we have been receiving them (gratefully) from the DoH for more than 10 years. We seem to have hit a bureaucratic stumbling block and the supplies are temporarily suspended. We are doing everything we can to overcome this; we hope that we have now found people at KZN Department of Health who are committed to resolving this quickly.

In the meantime, we are not prepared to turn away our existing patients without the medicines they need to keep healthy. The impact of this can be seen in how much we have needed to spend. From a fairly steady \$640/ £490 per month, this shot up to \$2,900/ £2,200 pm in the last quarter of 2025 and an eye-watering \$ 4,800/ £3,600 pm in the first quarter of 2026!

We are again grateful to supporters who continue to donate to us, especially ones who give every month. We were especially blessed recently to receive large donations from long-standing funders who have recognised our extra needs. We also, five years after his death, received a legacy from the late Archbishop Abel Gabaiza for which we give thanks.

Please contact us if you want to [know more about giving monthly](#) (and receiving a tax certificate if you are in SA or the UK). And also if you want to know [how to support our Paddy Kearney Legacy Fund](#) and leave an amount in your will which will continue to benefit the DHC for many years after your passing.

Photo: Empty shelves in our pharmacy as medicine deliveries have been suspended from the Department of Health but our patients still come to us looking for life-saving treatments.





SHARED IFTAAR WITH A SPECIAL OVERSEAS GUEST

Each year, during Ramadan, our Patron Dr AV Mahomed the Chair of the Jumma Masjid next door to us hosts a shared *Iftaar* at the DHC. This year we had the extra honour of a guest speaker from the UK. Dr John Witcombe is the Dean of Coventry Cathedral and head of the international Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN). He last visited the DHC 10 years ago and, as a result of that visit, we became members of the CCN. A few years ago, we had a wonderful series of international and ecumenical services which saw the symbolic cross being passed from the Anglican Dean to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham to the Anglican Bishop of Natal to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durban!

The CCN brings together organisations that are committed to working for reconciliation – initially Christians of different denominations and now people of different faiths. It was an honour that Dean John, after visiting a number of CCN members in Cape Town, took the trouble to come to Durban and attend our *iftaar*.

Present that evening at the DHC were not only Christian leaders of different denominations but also members of the Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist communities. AV talked about the importance of co-operation between faith groups in Durban to help transform the city, as evidenced by the work of the DHC. Dean John shared about the growing collaboration of Christians and Muslims, especially in the West Midlands where he is based.

After the talks, there was a poignant period of silence in which each of us could reflect in our style on what I can do to contribute to reconciliation. This was broken by the beautiful *adhan* – the call to prayer that was being chanted from the mosque next door. After sharing dates as the traditional way of breaking the fast, some of those present recited the evening prayers (*maghrib*) and then there was an opportunity for people to share food and fellowship.

We were delighted by the media coverage that the event generated – not only an [opinion piece in the Independent on Saturday](#) by Dean John, and the [front page of the Mercury](#) on the Monday morning, but even a piece in the [SA Jewish Report](#) – perhaps one of the few Jewish newspapers in the world to feature a story about a Muslim *iftaar* and a talk by a Christian priest!

In a world being torn apart by conflict and violence, with religion often used as a false justification, it is important to show how people of faith can come together. We always want to focus on what unites us not on what divides us. This has been a particularly special month with Muslims marking the Eid at the end of Ramadan, and this week the

Jewish feast of Passover and the Christian Holy Week coinciding. On top of that, the Durban Hindu community – and especially our friends at ISKCON – are celebrating the Festival of Chariots. It is indeed a month of abundant blessings!

Photo: The circle in which participants sat during the iftar was a symbol of our willingness to share with each other and learn together.



PAUSING TO REFLECT IN LENT

With all the extra work in our clinic, and the on-going pressures on all members of our team, it was even more important that we took some time out during Lent to give people space to recharge. This has been an annual event for us and we are honoured that clergy of different denominations have assisted us over the years by leading the retreat.

This year it was Rev David Barbour from Musgrave Methodist Church who accepted the invitation. This was especially appropriate given the support their sandwich makers have given us over many years (alongside other churches in the Musgrave and Durban North areas).

The chosen venue was one of those hidden gems in Durban. Burman Bush is a beautiful 55-hectare nature reserve which is actually only 15 mins from our centre, hidden between the suburbs of Morningside and the Springfield industrial estate. Simply being in such a rich and natural environment – and letting the birdsong drown out the noise of the traffic – was very special for all 30 of the team of staff, interns and volunteers who attended.

David – who has been trained in Ignatian spirituality and often leads retreats in the Durban area – used as his model ‘The Cycle of Grace’. He took us through each step and invited us to reflect: How do we see ourselves as *accepted* by God? How do we *sustain* our relationship with God? How do we find *significance* or purpose in what we do? And how does that show itself in *fruitfulness* which in turn reinforces our sense of being accepted? He offered us a very moving quotation from French writer Simone Weil which was very suited to the lush environment in which we were praying: “It is the light falling continually from heaven which alone gives a tree the energy to send powerful

roots deep into the earth. The tree is really rooted in the sky.”

Our Lenten practices will end this Thursday at our weekly prayers when we will re-enact the gesture of washing feet. When Jesus did this to his disciples before the Last Supper, he gave them a mandate (hence ‘Maundy Thursday’): “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). At Christian services around the world, priests and bishops will wash the feet of men and women to show their commitment to such humble service.

In our team prayers, everyone will wash the feet of one other person and in turn will have their own feet washed. For many people who work at the DHC, washing feet is not just an annual religious ritual but part of the everyday work of tending to the homeless and refugees: washing feet, washing bodies, washing clothes and sometimes just cleansing people’s troubled lives. So the Maundy Thursday ritual reminds us that each person we tend is in fact the person of Jesus; and also that we must be willing to accept the humble service of others if we are to be able to carry out the service that God calls us to do.

We wish many blessings on all who are celebrating Holy Week and looking forward to the joy of Easter.

Photo: The group of DHC staff, interns and volunteers show how relaxing a half-day of retreat can be in their otherwise busy lives.



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