

Report on Social Outreach Projects (September 2008)

Two years ago we took a particular direction in our outreach work, which was informed by the following decisions:

- In the same way we tithe (give a tenth of our money), so we should tithe our time and talents also. **The focus** was to support human development: "applying the abundance of talents and skills within our Parish to support the vulnerable, youth and the unemployed to empower themselves".
- To create space for a variety of projects or 'Bridges of Care', in recognition of the fact that different people have different talents.

It is encouraging to see how much is being done in the life of the Parish. These include initiatives that started some years ago and are still going strong. There are also new projects:

- Swimming classes for children from Tateni
- Establishing a Crisis Support Centre
- 'Family Matters' to strengthen the role of families and improve family relations and values in our community
- Building at St Mary's Refilwe has begun and the basic structure is nearly complete

Much is indeed happening in terms of social outreach activities. At the same time it is also apparent that only a small group, often the same people, are involved in these activities. Granted, much more is happening than what we know about and many parishioners are involved in social outreach projects that are not directly linked to the life of the Parish. Still, far too few people are involved in Parish projects. Why is this so? Lack of vision? Lack of commitment? Too many projects? Or could it be more fundamental: that people do not fully relate to each other as part of the St Francis family?

I call on all parishioners to prayerfully think through this matter and to communicate their thoughts to me or Fr. Timothy. What can we do to ensure that we, the body of Christ, are more active and effective in social outreach matters as part of our stewardship role?

Erik Buiten
Parish Social Development Coordinator

Date: 16 September 2008

Update on Projects

Adopt a Family

Two years ago, the Black Sheep house group "adopted" a child-headed family in Mamelodi. The role they took was that of "God parents", providing both material and spiritual support. The scope of the project has changed, owing to changes in the circumstances of the family: they were awarded an RDP house, and a child was born to Kedibone. Kedibone has since been taken into Tateni as a trainee child carer, and Thabo has found employment in a local motor workshop. Our liaison is mainly through Tateni, and we have resolved to observe their progress and, based upon recommendations for Tateni, assist where they have needs and have themselves taken initiative.

Contact person: Tony Williams (tel 012 460 8530)

Craft Fellowship Group

The Craft Group has changed its name to the Craft Fellowship Group as it also welcomes members who do not practise a craft. Those who do, continue with their work despite the fact that Tumelong, through which the Group supplied their knitwear and other items to orphans, has stopped operating the Havens in Winterveld as a Diocesan project. The last supply of knitted jerseys was collected by the Diocesan Social Development Coordinator (Keba Matlhako) in June this year for distribution to 51 orphans in Winterveld. At the same

time, 45 jerseys and 33 caps were handed over for distribution at the Akasia refugee camp. A further 31 track suits and other clothing have been given to the Tshwane Place of Safety.

June van der Merwe says: "We hope to give the Winterveld orphans (our first love) small parcels of goodies in December." She also thanks friends and family for their continued support. "It gives us the assurance that our Lord is with us as we try to plug a few holes." The Craft Fellowship Group continues to meet on Thursdays for fellowship and refreshment.

Contact persons: June van der Merwe (tel 012 998 4364) or Hazel Tomson (tel 012 347 2139)

Crisis Support

The Parish has become aware of the fact that house robberies and hijackings in our community impact badly on family life and even threaten marriages. This led to the idea put forward at Parish Council at the end of 2007 that St Francis may have the human resources to start a Trauma Centre to help deal with this problem in our area.

It was decided to initiate this project by developing a group of Christian Listeners. Over a period of about one year people from the parish would be invited to attend various training sessions. So far, there have already been three training sessions. The last one held in August was on Listening to our Neighbours. Two more are planned for this year: Listening to the World and Listening to God.

The idea is that after this preliminary training there will be a meeting for the attendees to solicit their views on applying their new skills, and to decide whether the idea of a Trauma Centre at St Francis should be pursued. One option would be to link up with existing trauma centres that operate in Pretoria for a certain period of time and then to review the possibility of establishing one that operated from St Francis. Martzi Eidelberg and Monique Winn are leading this initiative. "We go forward in faith believing that the Holy Spirit will show how we should reach out and care for those who are broken and come to us for hope and healing."

Parishioners not already involved in the Listening Courses who would like to become involved in the Trauma Centre initiative, are encouraged to contact Martzi or Monique.

Contact persons: Martzi Eidelberg (tel 012 344 3299) or Monique Winn (tel 082 467 0078)

Family Matters

St Francis Parish is located within a wealthy to upper middle income neighbourhood area where children are normally well provided with funds. Young people frequently act independently, and the freedom they enjoy often leads to activities not known to the parents. There is anecdotal evidence of significant substance abuse and social misconduct. This points to poor communications between parents and children and weak role models within the families. Communication breakdown lowers barriers to peer pressures within the social sets in which the offspring circulate at school and later.

The need to strengthen the role of families and improved family relations and values has been recognised by parishioners. Hank Doeg has taken the lead in consulting widely with community leaders on how to tackle this challenge. This has led to the formulation of a Parish initiative which was launched on the first Sunday in September under the banner FAMILY MATTERS. At a project planning meeting held the day before, it was agreed that there should be a clear and simple strategy, namely "to improve communication in the family" (in our own, in St Francis, and once effective, within the broader community).

It is also recognized that the subject is broad and many faceted, requiring different approaches depending on the group involved (children and their parents or young adults and their parents). It was decided to prioritise the following:

- Youth Matters – activities will be planned through the Youth Group to improve communication between youth and their parents.
- Parish Life Matters – to focus on families in our parish activities.

Other focus areas will be added as the project gains momentum. We need the support of more people, particularly young adults and young parents, to assist the parish in taking this initiative forward.

Contact person: Hank Doeg (tel 082 683 5681; email hankdoeg@informsa.co.za)

Fill-a-Bag

The Fill-a-Bag, Feed a Family programme is ongoing and supplies some 20 bags twice a month to Maureen from Tumelong who facilitates the distribution of these to the needy. Carole and Jenni collect the food donations and also use cash donations to purchase stock to fill bags.

Donations in any form are most welcome – add your name to the list on the bags at the back of the Church if you wish to donate stock. If you require any further information, contact Jenni or Carole.

Contact persons: Jenni Lindley (tel 082 823 5897) or Carole Myburgh (tel 082 787 7755)

HEAL: Healing and Educating Addicted Lives

This ministry offered by Mark, Rob and Heatherlynn Lewis is going from strength to strength. A halfway house for drug addicts has been opened in Menlo Park (the property is leased to HEAL by the Anglican Church). The halfway house, which is managed by Mark Lewis, can accommodate 8 – 10 people and opened its doors to its first resident in July this year. The aim of the Halfway House is to help addicts who have completed a rehab programme to start a new life. We help them find jobs, cell groups, churches and to develop a healthy lifestyle.

HEAL meetings for addicts and supporters take place weekly at the following venues: Mondays at St Francis, Waterkloof; Tuesdays in Honeydew; Thursdays in Benoni.

These meetings have had a large degree of success. The HEAL ministry team would be happy to offer information on drug addiction and advice and assistance to those in need.

Contact person: Heatherlynn Lewis (tel 082 562 1432; email roblewis@netactive.co.za)

Irene Homes

The departure of Dana Dean to Cape Town and Marolee Smith for overseas left our parish without a coordinator to mobilise support for this year's annual fête at the IreneHomes. This initiative will die out if no one feels called to come forward and take over the lead. No other parish has stepped in to run the pudding stall, which was sorely missed by fête goers this year.

Contact Person: Shirley Hollier (Parish Secretary – tel 012 346 1108/7)

Mohau Children's Care Centre

The support given by Terry Brauer and Gesine Buiten has changed as a result of the appointment of a full time preschool teacher, which was facilitated by them. They still take children on occasional outings (the last was to Besters Bird Park). Terry and Gesine have also started to give creative art classes to older orphans (11-13 years) at Mohau's Bakwena satellite house in Kilnerpark. This happens once every second week on a Friday. Parishioners who wish to become involved are encouraged to contact Gesine or Terry.

Contact persons: Terry Brauer (tel 012 460 9101/ 082 569 6804; email shoes@mweb.co.za) or Gesine Buiten (tel 082 850 3840; email erikbuiten@mweb.co.za)

Soup Kitchen

This project has been operating since 2002 when it was initiated by members of the Morning Glories House Group. Working under the auspices of "Action Labourers for the Harvest", it serves primarily the street children using the Crossroads Shelter at Salvokop. Approximately thirty-five children, between the ages 12 – 18 years are housed at the Shelter. Donated food

for the Soup Kitchen is collected weekly, on a Monday, and the Soup Kitchen operates every Tuesday morning at the church.

The project continues, although the core team working on the project has shrunk from 16 members last year to 12 members. There was a successful fundraising initiative at St Francis to secure desperately needed money for food – this is to supplement the food donations from donors such as Woolworths, which are becoming less because of food price hikes. Additional donations of money, packet soup, stock and soup-mix are urgently sought. Also, more helpers are needed to ease the work load.

Contact persons: Mei Walus (telephone: 012 346 4586 or 082 333 2833)

Tateni

Tateni provides home based care for HIV/Aids infected and affected people in Mamelodi. It currently provides support for 450 patients and a similar number of orphans and vulnerable children. Over the past few months the number of drop-in centres that Tateni operates has increased from three to five. These drop-in centres operate every weekday afternoon (after school) and during school holidays. Here the kids get a meal, are assisted with their homework and receive other forms of psycho-social support.

Cathy Meiklejohn successfully concluded the swimming classes for four Tateni girls at the end of May this year. She reported “seeing them grow in confidence in the swimming pool and in many other respects”. In view of this success, Cathy is continuing with the project and has received generous donations from parishioners to pay for the lessons and kit for four more children. Last week she took the new group, this time boys, for their first swimming lessons.

There is a desperate need to extend the psycho-social support offered to children that attend the drop-in centres. This includes counselling and training in life skills, taking kids for outings, assisting them with their homework and offering them art, sport or other creative activities. Parishioners who are able to provide support of any kind are asked to contact Erik

Contact persons: Erik Buiten (tel 012 460 2067; email erikbuiten@mweb.co.za)

Swimming classes: Cathy Meiklejohn (tel 082 7898316; email gundi@mweb.co.za)