

BRIDGES OF CARE

St Francis of Assisi: Report on Social Outreach Projects (June 2009)

1. St Francis Craft Fellowship Group

The Craft Group, which used to support the Winterveldt havens, giving the children clothes and a party once a year, would now like to "adopt" a needy child-headed family. A list of Mamelodi families in need is being sourced from Tateni. It is hoped that more house groups will follow the example of the Craft Group. Mamelodi has been chosen instead of Winterveldt as contact with the families will be easier.

The Craft Fellowship Group continues to meet on Thursdays for fellowship and refreshment.

Contact persons: June van der Merwe (telephone: 012 998 4364)

2. Mission Zimbabwe: Bridges of Care

Four parishioners from St Francis of Assisi Church, Waterkloof and St Judes, Hartebeespoort, travelled to Zimbabwe in December 2008 to take food aid to two United Methodist churches in Mbare township, Harare, and to show spiritual and physical solidarity with the leaders and people of these churches. The trip was a wonderful, enriching and heartbreaking experience for all of us and if you wish to read more about it please visit the St Francis website on www.st-francis.co.za

Through the great generosity of St Francis parishioners and other people wholly unconnected with St Francis who felt moved to contribute towards sending food to Zimbabwe, we have since then managed to dispatch another 1 ton pallet of basic foodstuffs to the people in Harare.

Plans are currently underway to undertake another mission to Zimbabwe from the 13th to the 16th of June 2009. Contact has been established with the Anglican Parish of Ascension in Hillside, Bulawayo. They operate an outreach programme in the surrounding rural areas where the plight of the poor is particularly desperate. They have listed their needs as: basic foodstuffs, medicines (for their clinic), seeds for food gardens, stationary, books, clothes and blankets. We intend to travel there in two vehicles as well as a 2.5 ton truck. Our intention is to visit them, show our support, establish friendships and discover more about their outreach program and how we can possibly assist them going forward. This trip will be supported by St Judes and Corpus Christi.

We believe that although change is happening in Zimbabwe, the needs of the ordinary people remains great and will do for some time to come.

Contact persons: Nina Lowes (telephone: 012 425 6202; email: nlowes@sasfin.com) Erik and Gesine Buiten (telephone: 012 460 2067; email: erikbuiten@mweb.co.za)

3. 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 St. Francis Church.

The project continues, although the core team working on the project has shrunk from 16 members last year to 12 members.

Since last year November, Woolworth has stopped supplying us with left-over food because they claimed that some of those they supplied had been either selling the food or were using it for their own consumption. However, we were able to carry on with steady supply from Menlo Fruit & Veg. Sometimes we get baked goods from Polfyntie Tuisnywerhyd. Linda Lewis also collects food from Newlands Spar. We also get bread from Deli One. We hold occasional "Soup Sundays" to raise funds and rely on donations of ingredients from parishioners. We produce between 50 – 80 litres of soup on a Tuesday.

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

4. Tateni

Tateni provides home based care for HIV/Aids infected and affected people in Mamelodi. The scope of its work has grown over the last year and Tateni currently provides home based care to just under 300 patients and support to just over a thousand orphans and vulnerable children. About 650 of the OVC are serviced by 5 drop-in-centres that Tateni operates in various parts of Mamelodi. One of these drop-in-centres operates from the St Francis Anglican Church in Mamelodi. The remaining orphans that Tateni serves are not within walking distance from any of these drop-in-centres, but because of a lack of funds it has not been possible to open new drop-in-centres.

The drop-in-centre 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 has finished another round of swimming lessons (from September 2008-March 2009) with four Tateni boys ranging in age from 9-11 years. Generous parishioner donations enabled transport costs being covered for the boys and their caregiver to get to and from the Tateni offices each Saturday. Sponsors for each boy's swimming lesson costs committed to pay for the 6-month period. The St Francis Children's Church gave all their collections for 2008 to support the swimming lesson initiative and the boys visited the Children's Church in October 2008. Cathy and a few other supporters of the project have continued to keep contact with the girls from the previous round of lessons and have taken them and the swimming boys on an outing each school holiday. It is envisaged that another round of swimming lessons will be undertaken in 2010. The future of the project will depend on sufficient financial support being found to cover transport, food, swimming kit and lesson costs.

There continues to be 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 person: Erik Buiten (telephone: 012 460 2067; email: erikbuiten@mweb.co.za)

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

5. Mohau Children's Care Centre

Terry Brauer ("Twellies") and Gesine Buiten still take the young pre-school children on occasional outings (the last was to the Zoo). Creative art classes are still given to the older orphans (11- 14 years) at Mohau's Bakwena satellite house in Kilnerpark. This happens once every second week on a Friday. Whenever possible they take the children for an outing in the school holidays. Parishioners who wish to become involved are encouraged to contact Gesine or Terry.

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

6. Irene Homes

Joan Jones successfully organised a pudding stall at this year's annual fete at Irene Homes. Many pudding donations were received and the stall generated nearly R3000. The plan is that Margie Couper and Elizabeth Boje will run the pudding stall next year.

7. HEAL: Healing and Educating Addicted Lives

This ministry offered by Mark, Rob and Heatherlynn Lewis is going from strength to strength. H.E.A.L. and the H.E.A.L. Halfway House continue to operate in trying times of drug addiction. The needs for help for addicts is ongoing, and often people arrive at H.E.A.L. desperate for help and financially broken having spent thousands on 21 and 28 day programs, doctors, psychologists etc to no avail. Our aim is to firstly intervene and help bring some sanity to the situation, secondly to recommend reliable rehabilitation centres where necessary, thirdly to help those who have been rehabilitated to integrate back into society. We design individual relapse prevention plans to help each recovering addict recognise triggers and danger areas and work at restoring the family relationships.

We also give lots of lectures to parents and addicts on topics such as "Recovery Principles", "180 Degree Turn" "Relationships" and many others.

We have had 14 people pass through the Halfway House so far with some good results. Two are presently writing their matric exams, one is doing a B Comm and about to start

work at an Accounting practice, one has successfully completed a Pilates training course, is now qualified and working at a studio, and one is back working as a qualified chef in a local wedding venue. We have had some "challenges" one person went back to rehab and we discovered one was dabbling in Satanism. Although we had to move him out of the house for the safety of the other residents we are still monitoring him and he has since given his life to the Lord and is involved in a church and cell group and being counselled by a local pastor. This week we were approached by a local business who have discovered at least twenty of their staff are involved in drugs and we are starting a program for these people next week. They will also join the H.E.A.L. meeting at St Francis on a Monday evening.

In an attitude of gratitude and giving back to society we recently had an outreach to Amadeus House a home for orphaned and abandoned children in Pretoria North. With the help of some local business donations and the work of the members of H.E.AL. and the halfway house we were able to complete some additions to their building by adding a roof, we repainted the whole house inside, removed a lot of rubbish and generally collected food and clothes, nappies etc.

We plan to extend our ministry and run seminars for parents on the practicalities of dealing with drug addiction as well as have the various addicts give testimonies. If you would like to use us in your church please give us a call. We are also grateful to have our webpage up and running again (www.healministries.com). We would ask all to please continue to cover us in prayer remembering that drug addiction often involves spiritual warfare.

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

8. "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 in September, 2008 under the banner "FAMILY MATTERS". At the formative meeting, a Family Candle was lit, which is now a feature in the Church at all services.

The initial theme of the project was driven by the theme : From Advent to Easter – a journey in faith, which aimed to focus the effort on creating awareness of the

importance of "Loving one another". In this period a strong focus was on bringing parishioners together as families, into the life of the church.

Considerable progress has been made commencing from the base of improving communications within the parish and between the parish and parents.

At parish office level, an SMS system has been introduced in addition to the already existing e-mail service. The contact effectiveness has improved. This has manifested itself by improved attendance at special fellowship activities, at which families are invited to attend.

Pamphlets covering a number of important issues in Family strengthening, have been published and after initial inclusion in the pew leaflet, are also posted in a specially prepared information centre at the back of the church. A similar distribution point is planned for the Parish centre, where persons not attending church and the youth movement will be able to have easy access.

Such issues as the influence of the Cyber Network, a register of sources of help on a variety of subject from substance abuse counseling, trauma counseling, reinforcing family values, the details of the initiatives involving young persons in the church, and the House (Bible study) groups are included.

Following Easter, the theme is "The Resurrection of the Family" and the period up to year end is a Journey "From Easter to Advent". It aims to encourage parishioners to act as the Disciples were urged to do, after the crucifixion.

The Children's Church has been actively involved in the project, and has intertwined its planned activities with the project.

The Youth Group has only recently commenced interacting with parents and one event of a parent and youth meeting over a meal and discussing issues has taken place. The youth at this stage do not see that they have a responsibility in catalyzing improved family relationships. This will continue to be addressed.

A pilot project to provide a method of improving the quality of marriages, by presenting the Alpha Marriage Course has been successfully completed. The first such encounter will be presented to parishioners wishing to experience it, later in the year.

The challenge for the rest of the year is to increase the effectiveness of families finding common, shared values, and improving communication. Following a successful Passover Dinner, the concept of families planning to meet over a dinner at least weekly, and also holding family meetings is to be pursued.

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

9. Crisis support

The Parish has become aware of the fact that house robberies and high-jackings in our community impacts badly on family life and even threatens 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.

After careful consideration it was decided not to proceed with the establishment of such a centre, but rather to provide information and make referrals to already established centres that provide crisis support.

10. Fill-a-bag : Feed a Family

St Francis used to supply 44 bags a month to Tumelong, but this number dropped to 40 last year and in April this year to 36. The main reason is that it has become more expensive to fill a bag. Just a few months ago it cost R85, but this amount has now jumped to R110. There are faithful parishioners who continue to fill a bag a month, regardless of the increase in price. But the money that others are handing in monthly or that is given on the two Sundays a year when the collection goes towards this project is no longer sufficient.

It has now been decided to bring this state of affairs to the attention of the congregation and to ask for additional support. Jenni also requests Maureen Mothiba, who collects the bags from St Francis, to let the parish office know her schedule well in advance so that the bags can be ready for her on time. More feedback on who actually receives the bags would also be welcome.

Contact person: Jenni Lindley (telephone 082 823 5897)

11. Building at St Mary's Refilwe

St Francis of Assisi assisted St Mary's with the construction of their new church building. The current Parish Council of St Mary's made a commitment in November 2008 that it will ensure the completion of the church building and the preparation of the consecration service in August. The Council remains committed to the initial plan, however, adjustments have come about due to financial constraints which are being addressed.

The completion process of the building project has taught the Parishioners of St Mary's a number of things, such as, Organisational skills, Project Management skills (Basics), Maintenance skills and Negotiation and Fund Raising skills. They have been educated on the responsibility of maintaining a Rector and the other responsibilities that go with it. There is also a new sense of belonging and ownership among Parishioners.

The Parish of St Mary's is currently collecting funds for the purchase of the last few items needed and the maintenance projects still outstanding such as, the leveling of the yard, tree planting and lawn laying and painting of the church building. Marco del Fabbro from St Francis has assisted the church through donations of a number of items.

The deadline is for everything to be completed by the end of July 2009.