



Christmas 2009



The Franciscan

Easter 2010
St Francis of Assisi Parish Newsletter

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Foreword

As this is the first issue of the year, it contains the list of who does what at St Francis, which is also an invitation to all to get involved: see the *Opportunities for Ministry* section at the back.

I have included two memorable addresses from the pulpit: the last sermon given by Rev Martzi Eidelberg, who served us as Deacon for many years, and the talk given by Dr Mark Napier to commemorate Habitat Day last year.

Thanks to those who submitted articles and pictures – the members of Oasis Youth Group, Colin Carte, who writes about Cresset House and Margaret Swemmer, who took the photos used in the collage on the cover. I hope they will inspire the rest of you to send me contributions for our next issue.

Jill Daugherty, Editor

From the Rector's Desk

My dear Parishioners,



I've never made any secret of the fact that, for me, Easter stands head and shoulders above any other feast or festival which the Christian Church celebrates. Its meaning is vast and fathomless – and this Easter, as we did last Easter, we would be prudent to set out (again) to grasp afresh its glory. Its true meaning and significance is so eternal, so utterly always new, we can never think (in some static way): 'Ah, now I know in full.' We must never cease to explore the meaning, as T.S. Eliot would advise. And perhaps, by a combination of new focus and grace, we may find ourselves catapulted out of the habitual, half-tired vision of things and perhaps (for the first time) see beyond the shadows and look with fresh eyes at this incredible Feast.

No one ever knew God the way that Jesus knew him: 'He penetrated the depths of the Ultimate Reality and revealed that the interior life of limitless Being is relationship; a community of persons sharing infinite life and love.' (Fr Thomas Keating)

Jesus never suffered from the feeling of separation from God that you and I experience. Yet Jesus chose, in the Garden of Gethsemane, to 'put on' the human condition and, in the process, experienced every level of loneliness, incompleteness, guilt and alienation. The ghastly sum of accumulated human misery, sin and guilt descended upon him. And it was this clear realisation of what was being asked of him by the Father – to trust himself as far from Him as anyone has ever experienced – which created in him such unimaginable agony and caused him to give vent to those immortalised words, 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.'

Imagine it: by absorbing sin into his innermost being, Jesus BECAME sin. As St Paul writes, 'He who knew not sin was made sin for our salvation.' But Jesus' prayer did not stop here, for he continues: 'Nevertheless, Father, not my will, but thine be done.' Jesus made this petition THREE times over and, as he prayed, drops of sweated blood dripped off that sacred brow – surely a direct manifestation of the overwhelming emotional agony he was experiencing. To have no sin and then to BECOME all sin: could there be any other response? The dread was not so much for the impending physical agony, but for the loss of his ONENESS with Abba (Father) who meant everything to Him. He was giving this relationship up – only because of his boundless love for His Father – and for you and I. As we grasp afresh this remarkable situation, it is my prayer that each of us, this Easter, 'bend the knee' before the Cross in an attitude of overwhelming gratitude and love.

Jesus rose from this prayer and returned to the place where He had left the disciples – no doubt, in the hope of seeking from their presence and friendship the solace and encouragement He must have desperately needed – only to find them 'indifferent' in that they were fast asleep. There was to be no human support for Him in this, His supreme moment of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, it actually got worse – for, saving one, all the disciples fled His presence once the authorities threatened. Jesus went to the Cross alone and for the love of God and Humanity **alone**.

This Easter, may we be challenged anew to grasp the ENORMITY of LOVE which the Cross represents. To see with fresh insight that Divine Love is not mere feeling, but a love manifested by deeds. And finally, may we embrace with practical reality the truth that the Cross has broken down all barriers – 'for there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek' (and we could add the modern postscript 'gay or straight, black or white, Jew or Palestinian, rich or poor, gifted or normal, adult or child' – or any other division we so readily create). Jesus, on the Cross died that all might have life – and as the One who through becoming our Greatest Sacrament sanctified all life, thereby making all human life sacramental – may we be challenged to bring the love of Christ to our societies without prejudice or conditions.

May **our** Christian walk be as unconditional as Jesus' own walk to the Cross.

May you have a blessed Easter!

Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.

Father Timothy

From the Parish Registers

Baptisms

Date	Child	Birth date	Parents
6 Dec 09	Kagiso Tlailane	26 May 09	Kalafo & Khumo
20 Dec 09	Alexa Lorna Amelia Wright	23 Aug 09	Jonathan & Katherine

Marriages

Date	Husband	Wife
7 Feb 10	Etienne le Roux	Sarah (Briggs) le Roux

Faithful departed

Date of Death	Name
6 Dec 09	Win Roebuck
6 Jan 10	Graham Walters
15 Jan 10	Gill Jacot-Guillarmod
11 Mar 10	Inez Barnett
14 Mar 10	Elizabeth Leith

SERMON FOR SUNDAY 27 DECEMBER 2009

(the last sermon preached by Rev Martzi Eidelberg)

READINGS: 1 Sam 12: 18-20, 26
Ps. 111
Col 3: 12-17
Lk 2: 41-52

PRAYER: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, O Lord, our strength and redeemer. AMEN.

One of the prayers that we often pray at the Tuesday Eucharist is: 'Jesus, You knew the love and care of an earthly home, be with migrant workers and their families.' I feel it is high time we change that prayer to: 'Jesus, You knew the love and care of an earthly home, be with all families.'

The family is the most powerful influence as far as shaping and preparing a child for life. However, many have become aware that the nuclear family, is in urgent need of help.

For more than two years now, we as a parish have been involved in **Family Matters**. The group of candles burning near to where the lay ministers are sitting, is a symbol of our involvement. In various ways we have been taking steps to improve family matters. *The Franciscan* has had articles on this topic throughout the year. And Archbishop Thabo, in a recent *Ad Laos*, seemed to give divine confirmation that we were doing the right thing by this involvement. And last month the government too embarked on another 16 days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. The theme this year was: Don't look away – Act Against Abuse.

It's in the family that the foundation of a child's attitudes and values are formed; where our characters are shaped. But often family life seems messed up. Many adolescents feel that their parents don't seem to have the ability or the inclination to communicate with them. Often they turn to their peers and drugs for solutions.

The Gospel reading for today also relates to family matters. If you listened to the reading carefully, you must have asked yourself: who would let a child go an entire day on a journey and not notice their son was missing?

If we take the story literally, Mary and Joseph don't seem to be good parents. But Luke is not talking about how parents should or should not behave. He is creating a story, building up to the punch line and making it as dramatic as possible: they go rushing back to Jerusalem, asking everyone 'Where is our boy?' And there he is standing in the temple telling his parents: 'I've got to do my father's work!'

The final verses tell us: He lived quietly – we assume with Mary and Joseph for most of his life. Jesus must have received extraordinary love from Mary and Joseph. The person who is as whole and free as Jesus was, had to have extraordinary parents. They must have loved him without manipulation, without those primitive patterns of shaming and threatening that are so common. If he had to be so perfectly loved by Mary, he would also have to be loved perfectly by Joseph; otherwise his young psyche would have been distorted. Joseph had to have been an extraordinary man and father, or Jesus could not have so readily called God 'Abba'. He could never have so utterly trusted his heavenly father if he had not had a human father who must have been very good.

I would like us to return to our Gospel reading and Jesus' statement to his parents: 'I've got to do my father's work.' And I would like to link this to Luke 8: 19-21:

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, and they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told 'Your mother and brothers are waiting outside wanting to see you.' But he said to them, 'My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.'

These verses seem to distress one: What does this statement mean? Why does it seem that Jesus is distancing himself from his mother and family?

Jesus came to earth to create a new spiritual family; to break down nationalism and to break down the way that blood family members sometimes keep one another from God, because of the tremendous social and peer pressure that can arise in families. (There is an important purpose to the natural family. but there can also be very destructive elements.) In the statement: 'My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it', Luke is telling us that Jesus has created a totally new definition of family that transcends blood ties and marriage. It is easy to belong to the right group, but it is much harder to belong to God.

Sometimes the spiritual and biological family are one and the same. This was evident at our recent Confirmation when some of the thoughts of the confirmands were shared with those present. But some of our young people do not come from Christian homes. It was for this reason that Megan Winn, our Youth Worker, made an appeal recently for mature Christians to befriend those youngsters, thereby assisting them in assimilating Christian values and attitudes.

This morning, I would like to use this opportunity of saying good bye to you, my spiritual family at St Francis. My journey with you has been a long and growthful one. You have enabled me to see our Lord more clearly and love Him more dearly.

I would also like to thank the three rectors who played an important part in my spiritual development. Firstly, the late Robin Briggs, who invited me to join St Francis and many years later ordained me as deacon. Then Martin Breytenbach, who invited me to become a lay minister and who nurtured me with his gentle, caring guidance. And finally Fr Timothy, whose passionate enthusiasm has made me appreciate the richness of Anglican spirituality.

The Church has often been likened to the Ark. We are like the animals in Noah's Ark: all very different, sometimes annoying one another by our mannerisms and attitudes. But we have a focus: the **Cross**; the **Kingdom of God**. It is that focus that enables us to go forward.

I thank you for the way that each of you in different ways has helped me to grow in Christ.

I end with the Gaelic blessing:

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.
May the rains fall softly upon your fields.
And until we meet again:
May God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

AMEN.

Martzi Eidelberg

And we return this Gaelic blessing to you, dear Martzi.

We thank you for what you have meant to each one of us.

Thank you for your thought-provoking and well researched sermons, for your prayers in the Lady Chapel after communion, for the encouragement and guidance you gave to members of the prayer team and to lay ministers and for your witness in the wider community – in particular through the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Religion against Crime.

We wish you and Philip everything of the best in your new home. Enjoy New York and being near to your son and his family.

The Editor



We as Oasis Youth Group want to challenge the world's influence on young people by discovering Christ's purpose for their lives.

We ended 2009 with a Christmas rally, Amazing Race 'Oasis style', that involved four different teams, which had to start by putting sentences in order from before until after Jesus' birth. It was loads of fun having the youth run in a two block radius around the church, in the rain, doing a whole bunch of activities and counting many things – among the things to count were the lights in the church, St Francis symbols and the amount of ADT signs there are in a block radius from the church. Can you guess _____? (See below.)

On 12 December 2009, eight leaders went on December Leaders training camp. The theme was: 'You say you love me but do you know who I AM?', focusing on the different names of God and what they mean about his character. It was a huge motivator and team builder. Read the article below from Phikolomzi Qwalela for more insight. We had a full day of fasting (we only ate supper) at which I think everyone did a lot better than they thought they would.

This year's Youth Group began with writing down the goals each member of the group wants to achieve this year through the Youth and on a personal level.

On 30 January, Joe and June van der Merwe celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary and Joe's 85th Birthday. The youth were very privileged in being able to serve and help out at the celebration. Uncle Joe and Aunty June are such an example to the young people of staying together and making a marriage work. The Youth also wants to extend a **HUGE** thank you for their kind donation (contributed in place of gifts by their guests) to the youth. We will use it wisely!

The month of February was the month of Love in which the Youth contributed by making over 400 chocolates for members of our

parish who attended the Annual Vestry meeting and the Tuesday morning Eucharist. We watched a Nooma video called 'Lump' in which it was explained that God Loves You, God Loves You! We also learnt about a boy who was autistic and 1.6m (which is considered very short as the average height is 1.9m), but loved basketball so much that through perseverance and patience he played.

Our Annual Student Camp, in which Taiki Dimas and myself co-ordinated activities, took place at Oppiberg from 21 to 23 February. This year our theme was: 'Being Real in a Fake World'. It was a wonderful weekend for the students to recharge and refill. Read Kayleigh Hill's article for more insight.

The Lent Course is been enjoyed by all who have joined and the confirmands and the Youth have enjoyed being included in it. It was seen initially as very scary and then found to be quite pleasant.

Our end of term Youth function will be held on Saturday 20 March at Nkwe, where we will spend the day swimming in the rock pools, jumping off the cliffs for the brave and having fun. A big upcoming event to look forward to is the Annual Dodgeball Tournament happening on 7 May at Willows Methodist.

Blessings, Megan Winn

Answer : 117 ADT signs



Oasis Christmas Rally

Dcamp or Paradise in Port Shepstone

Of all memorable experiences, few can attempt to equal the feeling of the presence of God – the peace that consumes one during this experience is quite unique. Dcamp is one occasion that captures the essence of this experience.

One could feel a sense of almost godly love and happiness among the Christians there, from the group time during the daily In Depth Training, to the friendly and helpful staff as well as the motivated speakers. The worship intervals were electric, intense periods of devoted praise and love, and were quite marvellous. The speakers were well informed and skilful orators who brought forth the message of Christ vividly and accurately.

Dcamp is also quite intense and action packed and had me running in top gear for much of the week, but it was splendid and truly a unique experience.

Phikolomzi Qwalela



**Front View of Dcamp T-Shirt:
You say you love me, but do you really know who I AM?**



Back View of Dcamp T-shirt:

Various names of God

Student Camp 2010

For most of us, student camp has been something we've been looking forward to since we arrived home from the last one. I know that this is definitely the case with me. Well, it was... until Kyle's GPS got us lost after taking us on a route that added an hour onto our estimated journey time. (May I just add that this route involved dirt roads with sheep and cows that obviously had never seen cars before and had no idea what this strange metal creature was doing on THEIR road.)

Nonetheless, I love camps because they always stretch who you are, they take you out of your comfort zone and they reveal the real you. This seems appropriate because the theme of student camp this year was REAL. Camp's focus was on being genuine in a fake world, how we can stand out and shine God's real love in a world that is screaming back at us that we're not good enough or that we don't have nearly enough of what it takes. The weekend was full of talks that challenged the students to have the guts and the perseverance to trust God and step out, to face the Goliaths in their lives despite the Israelites that try and keep them down.

But the weekend wasn't all work and no play. Funnily enough, trust came into one of the activities we did on Saturday morning as well: the trust run. We stood in two rows, facing each other, all of us stood with our arms held straight out in front of us. One lucky person got to run as fast as they could through our human tunnel, while we had to lift our arms only split seconds before they reached our hands. Now this may seem pretty simple when you're making the tunnel yourself, but let me just say that when you're the one with arms flying past your head, it's most certainly easier watched than done! Many had to redo the run due to ducking heads or very slow jogging! (No names mentioned, *cough* Taiki.)

Beautiful memories were made and many friendships rekindled. From activities that scared us to ones that gave us confidence. We listened, we learnt and we were lured back to the heart of our Father. Thank you to all who made this weekend possible and to those that joined us in fellowship. And, as usual, now that I'm home, I'm so ready to go back!

Kayleigh Hill



Running the gauntlet of trust

FAMILY MATTERS UPDATE

Lent is a Time for Reflection

Your Family Matters team met recently to reflect on what had transpired in the past 18 months and where we are in our plan. We can count our blessings in what has been achieved:

- Communications have improved.
- There is a general feedback, through the TeleVisiting programme, that the parish feel a vibration of care and concern.
- Several projects have been started and are continuing at a slow pace, mainly due to the shortage of volunteers to continue.
- We have an ever present symbol of Family, in the group of candles that burn at each service.



**WE NEED FAMILIES TO VOLUNTEER, IN TURN,
TO LIGHT THESE CANDLES AT EACH SERVICE –
WHY NOT STEP UP?**

Please mention your willingness to your sidesperson.

The Sharpening of Focus

A group of parishioners has volunteered to concentrate on the needs of the ELDERLY who often are lonely or have need of convivial fellowship. More will be heard of this.

The YOUTH have refocused their efforts and promise to make a significant contribution towards our main goal of the “re-establishment of Family Unity and Christian values” this year.

An effort is in hand to revitalize the successful MARRIAGE COURSE, following the departure from the parish of the Meiklejohns.

Contact Rudi von Staden

Families with Children at Home

Is your family one of these, or are you blessed in having your grandchildren visiting frequently?

We encourage you to sit down (ideally as a family) and count your **blessings** for what exists in your home – why not write them down before Easter, so that you can include them in your Easter Celebrations?

While reflecting on these blessings, the first of which can depend on the relationships within the home, the mutual care, and reflections of Christian Love, you may well identify the **external threats that are threatening the atmosphere in your home.** Why not list these also and, together with your family members, seek to explore how to convert these factors to opportunities to strengthen your family.

Said Guy Pearson, Rector of Michaelhouse, on addressing grandparents and grandsons in the Chapel on Grandparents Day, 26 April, 2009:

I believe that Grandparents are becoming increasingly important in the lives of their grandchildren in the society in which we live today.

So, Grandparents, you have a very important role to play – have you talked to a grandchild today?

See: **A Role for Grandparents** in the Family Matters library at the back of the church for more on this subject.

Hank Doeg

World Habitat Day 2009 – An Address by Mark Napier

World Habitat Day falls on the first Monday of October of each year. This year the theme for the day was “Planning our Urban Future”. UN Habitat, which is the part of the United Nations that deals with human settlement issues, uses World Habitat Day to draw attention to the plight of people who live in slums and overcrowded conditions. One of their rallying calls is “Cities without Slums”.

Housing issues also affect the developed world. You may remember that one of the triggers for the US recession, which became the global recession, was the subprime mortgage crisis in June 2007 where people who could not really afford home loans had been given mortgages, and these mortgages had fairly shaky foundations.¹ [...]

Possibly because of this recent history, when World Habitat Day came this year, even US President Barack Obama gave a special address in which he focused on the world-wide challenge of homelessness and people without housing. Globally, to quote the US Ambassador to the United Nations, “About one sixth of humanity now lives in slums and the figures are set to rise in the near future”. Many nations have committed themselves to addressing the challenge of slums. One of the Millennium Development Goals which the United Nations has promoted is to bring significant improvement to the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. Given that there are over a billion slum dwellers world wide, and that this figure grows daily, even UN Habitat admits that this is a difficult undertaking.

The challenge is all the more real in an African context where, historically, countries have had more people living in rural areas than in urban areas with a major activity being subsistence farming. This landscape is changing dramatically, with more than half of all African people likely to be living in cities and towns by 2025, only 15 years away. To make it more real, Gauteng is currently home to around 10.5 million people. Even with

¹ <http://www.foreclosuredataonline.com/blog/foreclosure-crisis/the-subprime-mortgage-crisis-how-did-it-all-start/>;
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subprime_mortgage_crisis

conservative scenarios, and factoring in loss of life from Aids, the Gauteng population is likely to cross the 20 million people mark in about 30 years time.² This means that our cities will look very different even within our life times.

Rates of urbanisation in the sub-Saharan region are some of the highest in the world at the moment, and we are seeing the very real effects on people's lives as they struggle to find shelter, clean water and sanitation. Our diocese decided to celebrate World Habitat Day this year in line with the theme of the Pretoria Diocese of "turning houses into homes". This goes back to the 2008 Synod when Bishop Seoka talked about equipping and strengthening families. One of the most important places where family life is built is in the home. If that home is over crowded, with adults and children sleeping in the same room, with a leaking roof, no toilet nearby, and no place for the children to be able to do their homework, then the challenge of building families and restoring family values becomes that little bit more difficult.

Talking about having access to sanitation, and a toilet, you would be surprised at what it is like to live without one! I was recently in a meeting with someone from the people's organisation called Abahlali baseMjondolo³ who represent a number of squatter communities in the country [where] they were talking about "flying toilets". I do realise that we are in a hallowed space, but this form of sanitation just illustrates what we are talking about when we say that people do not have adequate sanitation. [...] Flying toilets are used by people who have little access to pit latrines, and who then have to use a plastic bag as a toilet. These are then tied up and thrown into the nearest open space, hence getting the name flying toilet. While rather colourful as a description, and the man from Abahlali made this reference to flying toilets as a joke, the reality is pretty grim.

Poor sanitation, water supply and a lack of privacy are a reality for around 2.5 million households in South Africa who are living in shacks or

² www.migration.org.za/publication/gauteng-2055-trend-paper-population-migration/
& www.gsb.columbia.edu/ipd/pub/Trend_Paper_Landau.pdf

³ www.abahlali.org/

overcrowded conditions, even despite us having one of the most productive state housing programmes in the world. As you will appreciate, caring for someone who has HIV or Aids is also challenging in these conditions if water is not clean, if there is inadequate sanitation, and if there is no privacy. So is accommodating people with disabilities.

Another dimension of living in shack settlements is crime. We tend to focus on property crimes because perhaps we feel most vulnerable to that. And you would think that property crime affects the wealthy the most because they have property. Victimization studies show that the poor are more affected by property crime.⁴ If you cannot secure your home against burglary because it is flimsy, if you cannot get the police to respond because you do not have an address, or a passable road leading to your house, and if you don't have any insurance for the few things that you *do* possess, then you are very vulnerable to property crime. If you are running a Spaza shop and you have your whole stock stolen, it is very difficult to recover from that, and to carry on with your business which may be your only source of income.

Added to that, about a third of all crime which happens in South Africa, according to the latest crime statistics, is called contact crime. This includes assault, murder, rape and robbery where someone threatens you directly. Again the poor are most vulnerable, and many of these crimes take place in the home. It is a real challenge to address this from a crime fighting perspective. Improved homes are a part of the solution to being slightly less vulnerable to both property crime and contact crime.

Because of a combination of unemployment, low incomes and fairly high interest rates, most households in the country cannot afford to build or finance a secure house made of brick or concrete block. For those who like numbers, two thirds (65%) of households in South Africa cannot afford any kind of formal house without help from the government. Another 18% can afford a mortgage of around R230,000, which buys a house only a little larger than the government RDP house, but there are not enough houses being built in this range for people to be able to go out and buy such a

⁴ www.unicri.it/www/analysis/icvs/ & www.sabinet.co.za/abstracts/crim/crim_v19_n1_a2.xml

house. [Those] who earn more than R9,000 a month [form part of only 17% of the population] able to buy our own houses, or rent a house or flat reasonably close to where we want to live.⁵ The above figures show that we do have quite a challenge, both in the region and within the country, if we are going to “house the nation” and turn “houses into homes”.

Because of the way our cities and towns were planned, the rich and poor tend to live in different parts of the city. Despite huge urban investments since 1994, and progressive urban plans which try to integrate the city, this pattern is still with us. In our daily lives moving around Gauteng and the country in our air conditioned cars, we don't usually see how the majority of people live. That's why it wasn't such a bad idea for the new Human Settlements Minister to spend the night in Diepsloot a few months ago, even though it may have been more about attracting media attention. Despite this it was a daring thing for the Minister to do. Spending even one night in a squatter settlement is quite a wake-up call, and is definitely one of the one hundred daring things you should do before you die!

Despite all that I have said so far, it is not all bad news. There is a great deal of hope, with people building their own houses and settlements, with the supply of electricity, water and sanitation to many millions of households, and with a large state housing programme which does address real issues and delivers well for the most part. Ironically, because the government is very involved in delivering houses and services, people then expect a lot of the State. This is clear from the many community-based service delivery protests over the last two years.

But what should we be doing? How can we help? How can we speak into this situation?

I could, at this point, give you a list of all the urban planning visions for the future, and all the urban infrastructure investment strategies in the country, and all the institutions which have been created to address these issues. [...] There is a great deal that is being done, and there is a lot of good news, but listing all of this could get quite boring. Rather than doing

⁵ Affordability statistics from Kecia Rust.

this, perhaps I could at this point take the liberty of personalising some of this.

When I studied architecture in Durban in the 1980s, it was a special time in the history of the country. The government in power was making last-ditch attempts to justify apartheid. The state of emergency came into effect in the mid-eighties. As a student and living in a student YMCA, I was getting an insight into the reality of apartheid which I had not heard about during my school education. I was not as involved as I should have been, but one weekend I went out with other students to Inanda north of Durban to help people building their houses.

A defining moment for me that Saturday morning was when I was sitting on the roof of a shack nailing down the corrugated iron sheeting. The sun was bright and the corrugated iron was brand new! A Defence Force Casspir was driving slowly along the dirt road and came to a halt next to us as we sat on the roof. As I remember it, there was one white soldier with his R4 rifle sitting on the roof of the Casspir. We were at the same eye level and looked at each other for what seemed like a long time but was probably only a few seconds. It seemed to illustrate our choices as individuals. Although you might say that conscription wasn't a choice at that point for young white men, it showed me that what you do or what you choose not to do has an impact on society. The Casspir then moved on and I let out my breath.

I had been brought up (not in the Anglican church, by the way) to only measure my faith as a personal relationship with God. If you were right with God, society would work because it would be made up of people who were all doing the right thing because of their individual relationships with the deity. I was told at the time that PW Botha was a born again Christian and therefore we as a Church should defer to the authority of the government!

I then read a book called *Radical Discipleship*, by Christopher Sugden, which showed how Christ was incarnated into the society of his time. Without being disrespectful, Jesus did not float a few inches off the ground and move around in a haze to preserve the shine on his halo. Life

then was short, dirty and mean, and Jesus was right in it. I met a missionary couple who followed this model of incarnational ministry, and they lived in a wattle and daub shack in Amaoti, also north of Durban, and did amazing work.

The architecture I was being taught in university was mainly about working with one client or corporation to design the building of their dreams. If the client had lots of money, all the better for the creative flair of the architect. We were not taught practically how to work for a community of poor people: well there is no money in that, is there? Despite this training, there were quite a few architects and lecturers in Durban who did a lot of work with poor communities. We were offered a course on housing in the fourth year, which I took, and which was how I started off on the journey from being an architect to being more of an urban policy and housing person.

Leaving the 1980s and returning to the present, the challenge as I see it is how to work at the personal level, but how also to address the larger structural issues which keep people poor, and mean that two thirds of the country continue to be unable to afford to build a solid house. Our role is definitely to ameliorate suffering where we find it. I do envy people who have this as their calling and are capable of showing mercy and helping practically at the personal level. There is no doubt that in these situations we are the hands of Christ helping people in need. If in society there were enough people of all faiths, and even people of no faith, being practical about helping others, certainly that would alter many, many lives.

If we go back to this idea of urbanisation, the mass of people moving to cities is made up of individuals who are each trying to make a better life for themselves and their families. Finding a foothold in a city is an incredibly difficult challenge, and people are amazingly creative and resilient in doing this over many years. If that person “meets Christ” in us along their pathway then they certainly have a better chance.

But there are also more fundamental issues. Over the last three years I have been moving beyond some of the housing issues, and looking more closely at urban land issues and property markets. Given the history of our

continent, land issues are notoriously emotive. There is an old Xhosa proverb which I often quote, that reads:

When the Whites came we had the land and they had the Bible. They asked us to close our eyes and pray. When we opened them again, we had the Bible and they had the land.

Discussing land and property certainly brings out our possessiveness and territoriality. We all compete for space especially where land is valuable. Where you are located in an urban area has a huge impact on how quickly you are able to succeed in your urban life. For example, if your Spaza shop is at the edge of the city in a shack settlement or township, you can sell small bits of things to your equally poor neighbours. But if you have a trading licence to sell food in the middle of town, your business is that much more profitable and you can become less poor quite quickly.

I talk to a woman who has a stall outside the building where I work in Hatfield. She has a very good position to trade from, but no trading licence. Pick n Pay makes complaints to the City Improvement District organisation that she is taking away their business, and she is under constant threat of removal, particularly as we approach the 2010 World Cup, when many street traders will lose their positions in the interest of a 'good, clean-looking' city. We do need to find ways to live together. As residents we defend the value of our property and the usual result of that is that we don't like to live too close to poorer people. That would bring down our property value!

But our cities are so divided, still, despite attempts to change it. At the heart of this are the attitudes to property and land ownership. There are ways to integrate cities and to live together, and perhaps that's the challenge to us this morning. If the vision of Cities without Slums, and Houses to Homes, is to become a reality then we need to give a little, even perhaps a tithe off of our property value, which may be the cost that we need to pay to allow the working class to live in the suburbs! This may be the price we should consider paying for integrating the city and giving more people a better livelihood.

When the woman anointed Jesus with expensive perfume, Judas complained that she was wasting money that could have been better used for the poor. Jesus responded with the comment: *The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.*

This is often used as a kind of throwing-up-of-the-hands statement about the inevitability of poverty. Quite a few people believe, however, that Jesus was referring to Deuteronomy 15, which puts a different spin on the matter:

If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and freely lend to him whatever he needs.

(Deut. 15:7-8)

This would certainly change the world and perhaps we won't always have to have slums and squatters. We're all in this together. And in the meantime, while we still have such inequality in our society, there's lots to do, and lots that we can do, I hope.

Mark Napier

Mirabile Dictu! – (Latin for “holy lightning!” [Lit. amazing to relate])

All the Christian denominations were having a big ecumenical meeting in a church. Suddenly, lightning struck and the church caught on fire!

- The Methodists gathered in a corner and prayed for the fire to go out.
- The Baptists gathered in a different corner and prayed for rain.
- The Quakers gathered for silent meditation on the many benefits of fire.
- The Lutherans nailed a list of the ninety-five evils of fire to the church door.
- The Catholics passed the collection plate a second and third time to pay for the damage.
- The Episcopalians gathered up their incense and formed a dignified procession out the door.
- The Fundamentalists declared that the fire was God's just wrath on everybody else.
- The Presbyterians elected a chairperson to appoint a committee to study the problem.
- And the United Church people shouted “Everyone for themselves!” and ran for the doors.

<http://ralphmiltonsumors.blogspot.com/2010/03/preaching-materials-for-march-21.html>

Submitted by Sheila Cave

CRESSET HOUSE

Cresset House is the place where I live and work when I am not at home. It is a village in Midrand for adults with intellectual disabilities. There are six family houses, each of which has a house mother (and sometimes a house father) as well as a young co-worker and eight to ten Villagers.

There are different work facilities where the Villagers work according to their interests and abilities: the Tunnels where I work is where different kinds of salad vegetables and herbs are grown; the Organic Vegetable Garden, where other vegetables are grown; the Wood Workshop, commonly known as the Woodworms; the Craft Workshop; the Contract Workshop; the Bakery and the Stimulation Workshop for the less abled. Some Villagers also work in the houses, although everyone has a job in their own house. Altogether there are 55 Villagers.

Other voluntary activities are Bible study, singing, Pilates exercises, music therapy, swimming, etc and some Villagers go to horse riding lessons. We also take part in different festivals throughout the year and sometimes put on concerts or plays.

You are all welcome to visit us and buy vegetables or other items from our shop. Just phone first at 011 314 1148 weekdays or 011 314 1864 (my house) over weekends. We would love to see you.

Colin Carte



The living room in Colin's house



Working in a tunnel and in the garden



A celebration meal

Some of the workshops

For more information on Cresset House see www.cresset.org.za
