

## August 2023 News from St Benedict's

This past month featured several opportunities for strengthening our monastic community's relationships with the wider church in various forms. We are situated within the Diocese of False Bay (in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa), whose bishop, the Right Reverend Margaret Vertue, has just retired. Brs Scott & Edwin attended the final service of ordinations to the diaconate & priesthood carried out by Bp Margaret, at All Saints parish church in Belhar. Brs Roger & Edwin subsequently attended a service of thanksgiving for Bp Margaret's ministry, at the Kruiskerk in Stellenbosch, shortly before the bishop's retirement.

Other interactions took place more locally at Volmoed. Br Roger met with a group of visiting deacons from within the local diocese, to talk about the presence of the monastic community at Volmoed. Rev Michael Battle brought another Tutu Travel Seminar group to Volmoed. They prayed with us and later met with Brs Scott & Edwin for a conversation about our life.

A group of spiritual directors situated mostly within the Dutch Reformed church came to Volmoed for a workshop with John de Gruchy on his *This Monastic Moment* book. Part of their experience here included joining our monastic community for chapel prayer on several occasions (including the early Vigils office). One of their members arrived before the workshop and stayed on after it. He attended all of our chapel prayers during his retreat times, and was clearly moved by what he experienced.

A Presbyterian minister also made a personal retreat at Volmoed. He attended our chapel prayers and Br Scott provided some spiritual accompaniment. One of the Unyoke groups for supporting peacebuilders had a programme at Volmoed, and one of their members, a man from Ethiopia, attended one of our chapel prayers. We interacted with some others more informally.

Our monastic community participated in the Volmoed Covenant service. This was attended by the three new Volmoed patrons, with whom some of us enjoyed interacting later in the day. It was also good to strengthen the relationship with the Andrew Murray Centre in Wellington, some of whose members were at Volmoed for part of the day.

We give thanks that Br Edwin has eventually been granted a US visa. The process was not without drama, as a decision was not made at the interview. It was only when he later fetched his passport that he found a 10-year multiple-entry visa within it.

Br Josias has started to develop a relationship with a special-needs school in Zwelihle, one of the local townships. This is something close to his heart and he hopes to be able to put his experience with Special Olympics South Africa to good effect in his presence among the people at the school.

Br Edwin travelled to Worcester to visit his grandmother, who had undergone a significant medical procedure. This was an opportunity for Br Josias & Mpumelelo to support him as they accompanied him on the outing for the day.

Looking ahead, Br Daniel will be leading a retreat in the first week of September for clergy from the Anglican Diocese of George at the Carmel retreat centre near the city of George in the Western Cape. We look forward to the arrival of our Superior, Br Robert James, on 11 September. He will be with us until 5 October.