



October 2022 News from St Benedict's

Br Roger represented the Priory at the Volmoed Trustees and Annual General Meeting in late September.

Br Daniel arrived in Santiago de Compostela on 2 October, having set out on the Camino from St Jean across the French border on 18 August. He attended the Pilgrim Mass that evening, which he found quite moving. As he was in his monastic habit, he was asked for blessings and thanksgivings from other pilgrims, which was a special experience. He then proceeded to Finisterre on the coast, which brought his pilgrimage to an end. He spent three days in Madrid before returning to southern Africa to continue his sabbatical, initially by visiting family in Secunda and Nelspruit.

The Brothers at Volmoed were accompanied by John de Gruchy on a day pilgrimage to nearby Genadendal, the site of the first mission station in South Africa (established by Moravians who were also a significant part of the early history of Volmoed and of the valley we are situated in). We were warmly welcomed and shown great hospitality. The site has been substantially restored in recent years. The driving force behind the restoration is Dr Isaac Balie, the first curator of the comprehensive museum, who graciously guided us on an extensive tour, sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge of the remarkable history of the place, including extraordinary verbatim quotations. We were even treated to some lovely organ music, beautifully played by the organist of over 50 years on the fine instrument they have in the attractive church building there.

Br Roger travelled to Mariannahill Monastery Retreat House in Pinetown KZN to attend the annual meeting of the Council for the Religious Life, together with representatives from most of the religious communities in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, as well as the Liaison Bishop who facilitates the interaction between the Council and the institutional Church. The meeting took place over two days in late October, and included reports from each community about its life and work, as well as discussion of challenges that exist within communities and between communities and the church. We also prayed and ate together and had times of fellowship, all of which strengthened the supportive relationships among communities.

We were pleased to welcome one of our local Associates to Volmoed for a weekend retreat. Guests at our chapel prayers and Eucharists included Quakers, Dutch Reformed and even a Presbyterian minister from South Sudan. It was good to have a man pray with us who some years ago had participated at our previous monastery near Makhanda (Grahamstown) in an enquirer's week organized for those interested in exploring a vocation to monastic life. We were asked to bless two groups of pilgrims on their way to Cape Agulhas along the local Pilgrimage of Hope.