

January 2023 News from St Benedict's

Another VYLTP/Taizé Youth Day was held at Volmoed on the first Saturday in December. Br Scott led one of the afternoon workshops, on an aspect of prayer, and our monastic community attended the prayer around the cross at the end of the day. As usual, the young people seemed to appreciate the opportunity to spend a day at Volmoed, which included enjoying time outdoors in the beautiful environment here.

Edwin Kriel continues to settle well into life as a postulant with our community. His experience with previous VYLTP events proved useful when they found themselves shorthanded in the organization of the most recent Youth Day. Edwin also coordinated the involvement of several Volmoed community members in the creation of Advent wreaths (one for each chapel) and in the writing of meditations on the themes of each week in Advent. He is also very hospitable towards any guests who cross his path.

Volmoed welcomed a substantial number of guests during the festive season. As a result, our Christmas and New Year's Day (on which we observe the Feast of the Holy Name) chapel celebrations were well attended with many joining us for coffee/tea and confections afterwards. We are pleased to be able to offer hospitality in this way. Our monastic community brought the old year to a close in fellowship with several of the residential Volmoed community and friends, well hosted by Mike and Alyson Guy on New Years Eve.

We were happy to welcome Br Luc on his return to us from the US in early December. He will be with us until early March, when he will return to the US for his Life Profession, an occasion of great celebration.

And, of course, it is very good to have Br Daniel back with us after his six-month sabbatical, which featured many and various adventures and enriching experiences in sundry places. He spent Christmas and New Year with family in relatively nearby Robertson before re-joining us on 2 January.

We were pleased to have the Volmoed staff join us for morning prayer before their year-end outing. Several guests at Volmoed also joined us in chapel prayer, including another group brought across from the US by Rev Michael Battle, and a motorcycle riding Dutch Reformed minister who values Jesuit spirituality and was at Volmoed for a week's silent retreat. Pilgrims were blessed and then joined us for evening prayer. We continued to engage in spiritual accompaniment and guidance with various people, some in person and some online.

Br Roger and Br Scott continue as trustees of the Order's Holy Cross School in Makhanda, in the Eastern Cape. We are told that the celebration with much singing and dancing at the close of the previous school year was especially momentous, because the Grade 7 learners who graduated then were the first class who have gone the whole way through the school from Grade R to Grade 7.

Most recently, our monastic community benefitted from an eight-day silent retreat together, a period when we are able to spend more time in relative solitude for individual prayer and study and refreshment.