

Ascension News

Church of the Ascension – Hilton
Anglican Diocese of Natal

December 2011 – No. 6 for this year
Including Christmas & January 2012 Services

In this newsletter:

Robin Greenwood is honoured
Planned Giving

Social Responsibility – what have we achieved this year?

“Keep the Faith” – Tom Wright (The Spectator)

General News, Remembrances, Arrivals and Departures

Hello, parishioners of Ascension:

Your parish clergy and staff pray many things for us all:

A wonderful celebration of the Feast of Jesus' Birth at Christmas-time; As disciples of Jesus: Continued friendship with him (or, renewed friendship or deepened friendship, as the need may be); Good holidays, time to relax from busy days and to reconnect with what is truly important in life and faith; Strength for the weary and comfort for the grieving; A good year in 2012; and... A willingness to be the best for the world – to be the best that we can be, using the gifts, abilities, experience and wisdom that God has given us for the good of the world, the church and all to whom God enables us to show Grace!

Service Info: Carols, Christmas, New Year's Eve & January 2012

Information about all these services is separately provided - in a loose leaflet for those receiving this in printed format, and in a separate file for those receiving this electronically. Note the services with a special focus, and several changes to service times from past years.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: What have we achieved this year?

Distribution of 14 food boxes per week at present via the Masibumbane Mission of Hilton Methodist Church, to families & individuals living with HIV / AIDS in Mpophomeni. Thank you to the faithful team who meet on a Monday afternoon even on public holidays to make up these food boxes.

Never Never Land Crèche: This project has been perhaps the one with the most focus this year as it has seen Church of the Ascension contribute R30,000 together with St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church and Engen who each contributed R30,000. These donations have facilitated the construction of a wooden cabin for a large classroom and also a toilet block with 4 child size toilets and a wash basin.

The Principal, Zandile Khoza, is doing wonderful work with the children and hopes to arrange for one girl in Grade R who shows great promise, to receive a bursary to Hilton Pre-Primary. Zandile has gained tremendous benefit from spending time at Hilton Pre-Primary; they have also done much to assist the crèche. Zandile has trained to be a qualified Psycho Motor Instructor which also benefits the children under her care.

Our children are so privileged in so many ways compared to those living just over the N3 at Emandleni and it is a privilege in return to be able to help to offer at least some of the same advantages to these children who are such an important part of the future of our country.

Hlanganani Ngothando

This is an annual project in the form of the "Shoe Box" Project. They do amazing work in rural areas around Bulwer, with a centre for children with disabilities, a pre-school, a youth centre and a craft project. Mary Orpwood who heads the craft project was delighted to sell over R3,000 worth of crafts made by ladies who have precious little income other than their earnings this way. Thank you to those who supported this.

The shoe boxes: Several boxes were donated by congregation members as well as R7 480.00 donated in cash which, together with R1 800.00 contributed by a group of young families (not part of the congregation), enabled us to purchase items and hand over 117 completed shoe boxes on Sunday 27 November. Thank you to all those who contributed in any way to this very worthwhile cause which facilitates almost 2 000 children experiencing a Christmas party and receiving a gift. Thank you to those who helped with the shopping, packing and wrapping this year.

Social Responsibility Report continued: Incidentals

In addition to all of the above we have occasional appeals for assistance which we managed to supply, for example, a recent workshop on the new Children's Act, facilitated by CHUMA (Children of the Umngeni Area) and for which we sponsored the refreshments.

I must also thank the administration staff, Julia and Jennifer who are always so helpful and provide those who knock on their door looking for food with items from our stock in the store room.

There are many who contribute to Social Responsibility financially and of their time and I would like to thank you all for your support.

Rosemarie Bullock [033 3431 434 / 084 549 5843]

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**Confirmation 2012**

If you or your child would like to be confirmed in 2012, please speak to Julia Denny-Dimitriou via the parish office, so that we can ascertain the viability of a preparation course. Confirmation candidates must be in Grade 10 or older.

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The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered: "Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."

Dalai Lama

Via the Laddsworth School Newsletter, week of 25 Oct

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Heard at grace, said by the 9-year old grandson of a parishioner, about to eat chicken for dinner:

Thank you Lord for food so sweet,  
Thank you for the birds we eat. Amen."

## **ROBIN GREENWOOD: THE ORDER OF SIMON OF CYRENE**

This is the highest award given by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa to a lay person, in honour of service and ministry to church and society. As a matter of interest and acknowledgement, two others in our parish also received this award some years ago: Michael Cassidy and Dorrie Nuttall.

At the service in the Cathedral on 26 November, to Consecrate Tsietsi Seleokane as our new Bishop Suffragan, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba presented this award to Robin Greenwood for his service to the Diocese over many years as Diocesan Secretary. Like a Company Secretary, Robin is the senior financial and administrative person who leads and oversees the ministry of the Diocese of Natal – the largest in our Church – together with Bishop Rubin and others.

We offer our congratulations to Robin, and his supportive wife Ann. Robin has also been a member of our parish for over 30 years, in which he served in numerous capacities. He has also taken on additional work in the wider Anglican Church over more than 20 years. A copy of the full Citation with several photographs has been sent to our Website manager for inclusion on the parish website.

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REQUEST FROM OUR PLANNED GIVING RECORDER

Merriel Neumann is the only person in our parish who handles the details of our confidential Planned Giving scheme. She presents information of a financial and statistical nature, without personal details, to the parish leadership.

She recently thanked all who had responded to our annual Planned Giving Appeal, and asked those who have not yet done so to please complete and return your PG form – even if you are a current Planned Giver and are ceasing / decreasing / leaving your amount the same, as a few have done.

What? No 25% increase?

There is no shame if you have to decrease or keep your amount the same, since everyone responds according to their circumstances and in the light of their friendship with Jesus. There is no Heavenly Headmaster's Office to which you are sent if you can't increase your giving by 25% or more, says your Rector, both seriously and with a smiley face to follow :)

Thank you for Forms returned, including apparently several new ones and many who have also offered increases in their giving for 2012. Additional Planned Giving forms are available from the office / back of the church.

KEEP THE FAITH: TOM WRIGHT
A serious, challenging and inspirational article!

Your Rector writes: This article, originally from The Spectator magazine in the United Kingdom (20 August 2011 – easily available on the Internet), has been widely circulated. Tom is a Bishop in the Church of England, and although he writes for the English church, it is inspirational in what he says Christian people simply get on and do in the name of Jesus. I commend it to you for reading and reflection. This is edited, esp. at the end of the article because of lack of space; the full article is available online or via request from Nic for those without Internet facilities.

*Though with a scornful wonder
 Men see her sore opprest,
 By schisms rent asunder,
 By heresies distrest,
 Yet Saints their watch are keeping,
 Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
 And soon the night of weeping
 Shall be the morn of song.*

Samuel Stone's hymn, replete with archaic spelling, expresses the Victorian hand-wringing over the supposedly dangerous heresies of John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal from 1853 to 1883. Stone's hymn [written in 1886] sums up the mood of many. Everything is going wrong, the godless mock, and all we can do is hold out for 'the consummation of peace for evermore'.

The same voices are raised today, warning that the Church of England, never mind the wider Anglican Communion, is finished. The ship is going down, and it's time for the lifeboats...

I would be the last to say there are no causes for alarm. Every age has produced serious challenges to Christian faith and life, within the Church as well as outside. Ours is no exception. But it may be worth reminding ourselves what the Church is for, and what the Church of England in particular is known to be for up and down the land — except, of course, among the chatterati, who only see 'gay vicars' in one direction and 'happy-clappies' in the other.

Snapshots from my time in Durham tell a true story of what the Church is there for. The foot-and-mouth crisis strikes the Dales, and the local vicar is the only person the desperate farmers know they can trust.

A local authority begs the Church to take over a failing school, and within months, when I visit, a teenage boy tells me, 'Well, sir, it's amazing: the teachers come to lessons on time now.'

The new vicar at a city-centre church, dead on its feet a few years ago, apologises that the weekday service is a few minutes late in starting; he has been helping a young, frightened asylum-seeker.... In one old mining community, so many shops had closed that the bank shut as well; the local churches have taken it over, and run it as a credit union, a literacy training centre and a day centre for the very old and the very young.

In a world where 'family' means 'the people in the neighbouring streets who are there for you when you need them', I ask a young adult what's different now she's become a worshipping member of the Church, and she replies, 'It's like having a great big second family.'

The Church, said William Temple, is the only society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members.

This is the real 'Big Society'. It's always been there; it hasn't gone away. Check out the volunteers in the prison, in the hospice, in charity shops. It's remarkable how many of them are practising Christians. They aren't volunteering because the government has told them we can't afford to pay for such work any longer. They do it because of Jesus.

Often they aren't very articulate about this. They just find, in their bones, that they need and want to help, especially when things are really dire. But if you trace this awareness to its source, you'll find, as often as not, that the lines lead back to a parish church or near equivalent, to the regular reading of the Bible, to the life of prayer and sacrament and fellowship. To the regular saying and singing of prayers and hymns that announce, however surprising or shocking it may be to our sceptical world, that God is God, that Jesus is Lord, that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and active in a community near you.

Despite two centuries of being told the opposite, the Church can't help itself. Secular modernism still likes to pretend that the world runs itself, and that 'religion' has to do with private spirituality and otherworldly hope. The Church has often colluded with this secularist shrinking of the task.

But the genuinely biblical vision, rooted in the four gospels, is of God already being king of the world, through the victory of Jesus. 'All authority in heaven and on earth,' said Jesus, 'has been given to me.' And on earth. The Church exists to demonstrate what that means.

It exists, in other words, to do and be for the world what Jesus had been for his contemporaries: to bring healing and hope, to rescue people trapped in their own folly and sin, to straighten out the distorted pictures of reality that every age manages to produce, and to enable people to live by, and in, God's true reality.

It exists not to rescue people from the world but to rescue them for the world: to see lives transformed by the gospel so that people can discover a new depth and resonance of what it means to be human, precisely by looking beyond themselves to God, to the beauties and glories of his creation, and to their neighbours, particularly those in need.

The Church does this through liturgy and laughter; through music and drug-rehabilitation programmes; through prayer and protest marches; through preaching and campaigning; through soaking itself in the Bible and immersing itself in the needs of the world. When God wants to change the world, he doesn't send in the tanks (as many think he should). He sends in the meek; and by the time the world realises what's going on, the meek have set up clinics and schools, taught people to read and to sing, and given them a hope, meaning and purpose which secular modernism (which gave us, after all, Passchendaele and Auschwitz as well as modern medicine and space travel) has failed to provide.

Saying that Jesus is now in charge, still more that the church is the agent of this project, has been rubbished for generations. The litany is familiar, though limited and repetitive: Crusades, the Inquisition, witch-burning and so on.

No church worth its salt will deny that it has made huge mistakes. We still say 'forgive us our trespasses' every day, only wishing that others would join us in this penitence.

But the reason the anti-Christian brigade point out the Church's failures is that, just as in Marxist totalitarianism, the state replaces God, making it atheist ... so in secular democracy the state attempts to replace the Church. That is why the Church is pushed to the margins, told to mind its own spiritual business and not to get involved in international debt or the treatment of asylum-seekers.

As we survey the result — crooked politicians, bent coppers, bloated bankers, spying journalists — it may be time for the church to be more humbly confident in getting on with its proper vocation, leading the way in the true Big Society, bringing healing and hope at every level.



PARISH NEWS

BIRTHS:

24 October Benjamin Andrew Rivers-Moore

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Ed Ender, Jackie & Rob's son, ordained as a priest in CESA (Church of England in S.A.) in Cape Town.

Our new Bishop Suffragan, Tsietsi Seleoane consecrated on 12 November.

Andy Kruger, ordained as a Priest on 26 November.

DEATHS:

29 November John Saint

GRANDCHILDREN:

Olivia Maxwell, granddaughter for Graham & Colleen Beggs

Joanna Catherine Kirsten, granddaughter for Michael & Carol Cassidy

Mikaela Cortijo, granddaughter for Rob & Grace Stranack

FAREWELL

Gail Pocket

Rob & Merle Tedder

WELCOME TO RECENT NEWCOMERS:

Brendan, Margie, Rosalind & Bryony Bournes-Harper

Pam & Richard Maltby

YEARS MIND

12 November 2010 John Cawood

Thanks from Julia & Jennifer

The church office would like to thank the ladies who give up their time and willingly help with the administration when needed.