

# Ascension News

**Church of the Ascension – Hilton  
Anglican Diocese of Natal**

**February & March 2011 – No. 2 for this year**

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## **First Emailed Edition**

This is the first Parish Magazine sent by email to most parishioners. Of over 300 surnames on our Parish Roll, representing individuals, couples and families, only about 50 either have no email or have requested a printed copy of the magazine; these will be available for collection at the back of the church for a couple of weeks after which uncollected mail will be posted.

We wrote about this in the January magazine, Sunday leaflets and “Flash” emails. Julia Lloyd, our Parish Administrator, has spent many hours setting up the database, double-checking that no-one has been left off or ‘misallocated’ to post instead of email. Thank you, Julia!

## **Ash Wednesday, 9 March: Services @ 10.00am & 6.00pm**

Both services, which should conclude in under an hour including the evening one, will include music and the traditional imposition of a sign of the cross in ashes on our foreheads as a sign of repentance at the beginning of Lent.

**ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING – SUNDAY 13 MARCH**

## **Eucharist beginning at 8.00am**

The Annual Vestry Meeting (our parish AGM) is held in accordance with the rules of the Anglican Diocese of Natal and the Constitution of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, to deal publicly with the following:

To receive audited financial statements for 2010  
 To accept your Parish Council's proposed budget for 2011  
 To consider important matters of parish life, worship, finances and property, &  
 To elect or confirm office bearers including Church Wardens, Parish Council members and a Treasurer and Auditor.

A Nomination form for Church Wardens and Parish Council members, with explanations, has been at the back of the church.

The Rector is required to give a Statement of Needs for the Parish - less a review of the past and more a focus on the year ahead. This is being distributed with the Parish Magazine to ensure you are informed beforehand, can raise relevant matters, and ensure our meeting is efficient.

### **About the Service:**

We will once again have a SINGLE SERVICE on that day at 8.00am - radically shortened and with a homily in place of a sermon. The meeting follows immediately thereafter. Sunday School starts at 8.00am. It is your Rector's great hope that many from the parish will attend, including families with children, so that the meeting is fully representative of the congregation!

### **Financial note:**

Parish Council has accepted the 2010 Financial Statements presented by our Treasurer, Neville Bailey, and Sven Jager has completed the Audit. Copies of these will be provided at the meeting, and only a summary presentation made. If you wish to see detailed statements earlier, please contact Julia Lloyd in the parish office, these will be made readily available to you.

### **General note:**

If you wish to raise any matters at Vestry, please notify the Rector beforehand, verbally or in writing, preferably by Weds 10 March. Minor matters can often be addressed prior to Vestry, and major matters can be dealt with efficiently in the meeting itself.

**COURSE DURING LENT 2011**

## **Invitation from your Rector**

Through our Diocese, a course of bible study and reflection has been provided for parishes to use during Lent. I happily recommend it to you.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 9 March (services advertised on page 1). The focus is on repentance and “pressing forward with eager faith and love” towards Good Friday and Easter, in the words of an Ash Weds prayer.

Many people also like to “take on” an act of study or reflection on their faith and life in this period, and this course offers one way to do that. Entitled “The Bible and Economic Matters”, it provides a weekly study / reading / reflection on issues related to economics in the light of the global recession, issues of wealth and poverty, and social relationships. The Bible has plenty to say about such issues; they are not for economists or theologians only but for people of faith to understand and grapple with, the better to inform how we live our lives.

Compiled by Gerald West, biblical scholar, professor at UKZN and a member of the Cathedral Parish, this course includes brief studies in the Old Testament books of Samuel, Kings and the prophet Amos, in the Gospels studying the words of Jesus and the Lord’s Prayer, and concludes with words of St Paul in the New Testament letters.

### **You can participate in the following ways:**

Existing bible study house-groups could do the course together in their usual format. Request a copy via email or printed at the office, and arrange copies for each member of your group or ask the parish office to do so for you. This study could also be done later if it better suits you; it is not confined to Lent.

You could come to the church hall on Wednesday evenings during Lent and participate in a wider parish group that Nic will facilitate. This applies to anyone, whether part of an existing group or not.

***Weds 16, 23, 30 March &***

***Weds 6, 13 & 20 April***

***7.30 – 8.30pm; bring a bible and note book & pen***

***Let us have your name – to ensure a printed course copy! Phone or email the parish office, or add your name to the list on the clipboard at the back of the church.***

**A Youth Pastor – What’s happening?**

Our Rector has given feedback to parishioners, and regularly to Parish Council, about attempts to replace our Youth Pastor. To date, no suitable young person has been found – not for lack of prayer or trying!

Three possible people were identified at various stages, each one giving rise to some excitement. One chose full-time ministry in a related youth field, another chose to work in an educational field, and yet another felt unready for such responsibility whilst at University. In addition, a couple of enquirers were not suitable for our needs. We continue to pray for this need to be met.

Since late 2010, Julia Denny-Dimitriou has organised youth activities, wanting to “maintain the existing momentum” as she put it. She has been assisted in this by Nic, and by Jo Stevens O’Connor, a parent and a former parish youth organiser. Should an appropriate young person be available for this post, we remain open to it, whether part-time and focussed purely on youth ministry, or whether it is a person with wider gifts and experience, like Andy was, thus able to be used in general parish ministry on a major-time or full-time basis.

**On a related note:**

### **New part-time Assistant Priest**

By unanimous vote of the Church Council, the parish has appointed a Part-time Assistant Priest with particular responsibility for Youth. The Revd Julia Denny-Dimitriou will join the staff on April 1, working 15 hours a week.

She and her husband, our Rector Nic, have been in discussion with the Church Wardens recently to consider some of the areas of ministry Julia will focus on. In addition to overseeing ministry to the Youth, she will also preach and lead worship more regularly than she has been able to in recent years.

Julia has resigned from her full-time job as a Senior Writer at *The Witness* newspaper in order to be flexible and have more time for her children, Hannah and Joshua, now almost 10 years old. She will continue to practise as a journalist on a freelance basis, which will occupy most of her “working hours”, albeit more flexibly than her present job has allowed.

The Church Wardens assured parishioners that this appointment would not create an additional financial burden as the funds to cover it have already been allocated in the parish budget. Commenting on this new development, a member of Council said: “It will certainly add stability, insight and huge value to our church community.”

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## **SUNDAY SCHOOL 2011**

This is for general parish interest, but intentionally addressed to all families whose children or grandchildren participate in our children's ministries, however frequently or infrequently. It comes from me as Rector and from Wendy our Sunday School Co-ordinator. Please take note of the issues raised, and contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

### **WENDY NORMAN-SMITH – CO-ORDINATOR**

Wendy is well-known to many in educational circles in Hilton and Pietermaritzburg, having served many years as both high- and junior-school teacher at numerous schools in these areas. She also has significant leadership and administrative experience, from her time years ago at St John's DSG, the then-Girls' Collegiate, Cordwalles and more recently at Cowan House. She is currently working with Lindi Redfern (also a parishioner) for the "Academic Support Programme" on a part-time basis.

She joined our SS in 2010, and when approached by our previous Youth Pastor, Andy Kruger, to take over co-ordination in 2011, she was most willing.

### **OTHER TEACHERS**

Several people are involved, all on a rostered basis, with the 3 groups of children from age 4 to Grade 7. Some have been willingly involved for many years, others are relatively new ... there is always room for new people to join this group, an important ministry of our parish in its own right. A few adults and teenagers participate as helpers and assist in admin areas.

Teachers this year include Shereen da Costa, Julia Denny-Dimitriou, Louise Graham, Hayley Gray, Nicolette Hohls, Penny Purchase and Belinda Rilett. Allison Lea is an assistant to Wendy and Margaret Case assists various teachers when the need arises.

### **OUR AIM:**

Young children need to be included in the Church, described by St Paul as "The Body of Christ", and not sidelined in any way. They need to hear about and experience God's love, to experience a sense of inclusion, and to learn about Jesus and our Christian faith in age-appropriate ways that are helpful and fun so that it forms a good foundation for later deepening faith as mature, thinking adults.

Lessons are carefully planned and the teachers follow a syllabus. Material used includes parish and Scripture Union resources, and an online source called "Light-Live" which teachers can use for preparation. It also often links to the seasons of the year used in Church, such as Lent, Pentecost and Advent.

## **TOGETHER AT CHURCH – AND RECEIVING COMMUNION**

Children are encouraged to start and end their time at church with those who have brought them – usually parents, also grandparents and friends.

Children who receive communion are encouraged to do so with their families, and are usually brought into the service in time for this. It is impossible to always get the timing right without unduly disrupting what the children are busy with, but we seem to get it right most Sundays. Those who don't receive communion are encouraged to come forward for a blessing.

## **FAMILY SERVICE EACH TERM**

It was our practice to have a Family Service each term on a Sunday at 9.00am, not longer than an hour, in which children remained in the service throughout and members of the Youth Group sometimes also led it. This will continue from Term 2.

## **SOME CONSTRAINTS ...**

It has been exciting to have significant numbers of children, including some new ones, coming regularly in the first Sundays of this term. However, we deal with the following constraints. They are mentioned, less as “complaints or moans”, more as realities with which we live, and we ask you to be aware of them; if you feel able to offer help in regards to these, whether in suggestions or in person, please come forward!

### **Numbers fluctuate hugely**

On Sun 13 Feb, for instance, there were almost 30 children. On other days, barely a handful arrive, or maybe only one child in a particular age-group arrives. Yet someone has spent a few hours doing preparation in that week. We have no way knowing who will come, when – but have to be prepared all the same.

### **Resources**

Compared to local schools (government and private), ours seem inadequate. We meet for an hour once a week, in church facilities much improved in recent years but inadequate compared to what the same children are used to in school. We don't seek to compete, but have to be aware of this constraint.

### **Lack of continuity**

This is related to varied attendance. We understand people have busy lives and many go away often or participate in sport and other weekend family activities. But it is very difficult to have continuity over a number of weeks, when some children come nearly every Sunday and others come maybe once a month or even less frequently.

**Teachers are all volunteers**

Some have extensive teaching experience, others do not but still have a love of children and a desire to communicate faith to them. We are grateful for everyone's time and ministry.

**NEVERTHELESS ...**

An important point to consider is that, with all the efforts we make to ensure that our children receive the best education possible, communication of Christian faith and values is surely not less vital than their reading-writing-sporting education!

**SCHOOL TERMS**

Because of the variety of school term dates, we follow government school terms. They usually coincide with private school dates though they are sometimes shorter, and this year private schools have dates differing by a week or more. Dates when SS is closed will always be advertised in the Sunday leaflets and in the weekly "Ascension Flash" email.

**CONTACT INFO**

If you have any concerns or comments in response to this, please contact the parish office, or speak to Nic or Wendy. Wendy can be contacted at home, preferably after 5.30pm, on 033 343 4517.

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**FAREWELL TO BISHOP FUNGINKOSI MBHELE**

On Saturday 12 March, a Thanksgiving & Farewell Service will be held at the Cathedral, beginning at 9.30am, to bid a good retirement to Funginkosi. Affectionately known in this parish as Nick (his first name is Niclaus), he first served as a Deacon in Hilton parish in the 1990's, after leaving his professional teaching and text-book writing days behind him to be ordained Priest – and eventually elected Bishop Suffragan (assistant bishop) in our Diocese of Natal in 2001. He was Bishop for our region of the Diocese. He will retire on 31 March 2011.

His wife, Matrina, retired a year ago as a Principal of a school in Estcourt, where they have a home.

The Diocese invites all who wish to, to contribute to a farewell gift for the Mbheles. You can contribute to the extra collection plate at the back of our church on Sundays 6 and 13 March, or bring a contribution to the parish office, or make an EFT (clearly marked accordingly).

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## News

### **DEATHS:**

24 February Dick Andersen

### **DEATH OF RELATIVES OF PARISHIONERS:**

Pam Ender, mother of Rob Ender

Marian Brewin, aunt of Mary Morgan

Denys Pennington, father of Mary Anne Elstob

### **DEPARTURE IMMINENT**

Jenny Brann – about to move to New Zealand. But before doing so, on Sat. 12 March she will marry Kevin Patterson, an old friend from PMB now living in New Zealand. What wonderful news, despite the relocation far away!

Glen & Kate Crouch, moving to Kloof in April after 23 years in Hilton. Years ago, Kate was Parish Secretary and Glen has been involved in church leadership incl. two periods as Church Warden. Glen's steel import business operates from Pinetown and Kate's legal practice is increasingly centred on work in Durban. Their sons James and Luke are at Michaelhouse.

### **FAREWELL TO:**

Ireeze & Bokkie du Plessis – returning to the E. Cape (Kenton area) after several years in Hilton; and their son Mark, 2010 matriculant of Grace College now on a gap-year at a Tennis Academy in Potchefstroom.

Barrie & Ethel Kotze who have moved to Amberfield after ±37 years of living in Hilton and being very active members of this congregation. They will still worship here occasionally.

### **RECENT NEWCOMERS:**

Heather & Angus Anderson

Fran & Brian Donald

Rob Fawcett

Julie, Hugh, Georgia, Scott & Angie Harvey

Kirsty Owen

Stanley Southwood

Jo, Daleen, Shelton & Casandra, Thomas

Cleone & Rex Miller