

News

BIRTHS:

05 February Emilia Dorothea, daughter for Sabine & Phil Stuart-Hill

BAPTISMS:

21 March Abigail van Heerden

CONFIRMATIONS: (those marked with an asterisk were also Baptised):

21 March Jaryd Anthony, Ryan Anthony, Claire Elsworth, Savanna Kanzler, David Krone* Mondli Ngubane*, Mason O'Connor, Gina van Heerden*, Rebecca Upfold

DEATHS:

7 April Alice Hurworth

8 April Graham Catterall

7 May Margaret Dowle

GRANDCHILDREN/GREAT GRANDCHILDREN:

Bethany Louisa van den Broek, grand-daughter for Mike & Penny Hallowes

MARRIAGES:

17 April Patrick Rafferty & Tordi Kruger

24 April Twan Potgieter & Ken Renwick

26 April Nick Rivers-Moore & Maryann Shaw

RECENT NEWCOMERS:

We welcome the following people who have recently joined our Parish:

Joan Alcock

Gareth Alcock

Kip & Val Anderson

Crighton, Anthea, Summer & Kelly du Preez

Janet Mill

Rex & Sarah Pennington

Diane, Andrew, Charis, Sarah, Claire & Nathan Pickford

YEAR'S MIND:

12 May 2009 Sherry Moran

14 May 2009 Clare Allison-Broomhead

30 May 2009 John Mogford

01 June 2009 Kitty Miller 8

Ascension News

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

No 2 for 2010: Pentecost

In this newsletter:

Real Food and Real Drink – Sermon notes by Ron Nicolson
Fund Raising initiatives
The Rector's Long Leave later this year
General parish news and remembrances

Ascension, Pentecost & following

Traditionally a time of celebration, these Feast Days will be being celebrated as this magazine is being distributed. Ascension is also a time when our parish acknowledges our great heritage of Christian faith, since the worshipping community began here in 1904 and the first service held to formally dedicate the church building was held on Ascension Day 1907.

The months that follow are sometimes referred to as “the long green season”, since green is our colour for clergy vestments and altar linen from after Pentecost until Advent & Christmas. The colour is indicative of the growth that God gives us (a gift of God's Spirit), and also our own response of growing in faith and discipleship of Jesus Christ.

Notes on the Eucharist – Ron Nicolson

I commend these notes to you, originally preached as a sermon in our church by Ron last year and re-printed with his permission. They have been slightly edited to fit the four middle pages of your magazine, so that they may be detached and kept for future reference if you would find that helpful.

Given that this is so central to our faith and our pattern of regular worship, I hope you find them enlightening and inspirational.

From your Rector, Nic

FUND RAISING INITIATIVES

As outlined at our Annual Vestry Meeting (March 2010), our budget requires Fund Raising to “balance the books”. We wish we did not need to do this, but it seems that additional funding in this way is a necessity. We also usually turn it into great fun, as intended with these two repeat events:

- Our (by now annual) Christmas Dinner in July. A date and venue will be decided upon and be communicated via Sunday leaflets and the weekly email Flash.
- A Wine Auction, to be held later this year, separately from our Dinner, (as many people requested).

Ten Talents Project: Is there a Champion out there?

We hope to raise additional sums, over and above the Dinner and Wine Auction, of R50 000 this year. One way of raising money was proposed last year by Julia Denny-Dimitriou and supported by Parish Council, but requires someone to champion the cause. It is referred to as the “Ten Talents Project”, and based on the story told by Jesus, it would involve giving out parish money... Anyone keen? Read the proposal on the notice board or ask us to email it to you.

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## RECTOR’S LONG LEAVE – AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2010

In 2009 I notified the parish that I intended to take long-leave this year. Full-time parish clergy are entitled to 3 months’ sabbatical after 6 years (I have been in the parish for 8 years). However, I will defer the remaining month until next year or later, and will take a total of 2 months’ leave this year during the quieter months of Aug & Sept.

I had originally hoped to lead a pilgrimage to Turkey (“in the footsteps of St Paul”) but family commitments and the economic downturn made those plans untenable for now – they may yet come to fruition in years to come.

The purposes of clergy sabbatical include: Have a complete rest from what is not a “job” but, at times, a draining vocation; to re-charge batteries; make time for reading, study, spiritual retreat and renewal, amongst other things. I will do all of these, mostly based from home though away for short periods. Of course, Julia’s work and our children’s school routines continue as usual.

Graciously, Ron Nicolson agreed to be a Locum Rector in my absence. He will NOT work full-time in the office during my absence, and Julia, Jennifer and Andy will continue with their administrative, youth and pastoral oversight of the parish. For services and preaching, Ron will be supported by other clergy and parishioners, but will be available as priest when needed. More details will be publicised in July before I take leave.

## GRACIOUSLY GIVEN FROM US TO...

As proposed and unanimously agreed at our Annual Vestry Meeting, our parish will soon distribute R20 000 as a 2% tithe of our 2009 income. This is over and above several other ways in which we give including Social Responsibility funding and our significant contribution to the mission and ministry of our Diocese via what is known as our Assessment.

Criteria included (a) giving to people / organisations linked with our parish and (b) giving to further a sense of community, mission and pastoral care.

### Council unanimously agreed recently to the following disbursement:

R9 000 – to Never Never Land Creche, Emandleni for safe playground jungle-gym equipment. In conjunction with Andy Kruger and others in our parish who have worked with this Hilton Creche, Jean Binnendyk has supervised this project; she is a parishioner with much educational experience.

R5 000 – to Kings Trust Ministries on behalf of Graham Beggs, parishioner of long-standing, in encouragement of his quiet but widespread Christian ministries of reconciliation and restoration of communities.

R5 000 – to Cornerstone Refuge for women and children in Howick, for a specific need still to be identified. Parishioners Gill and James Black, and Marj Mason, are very involved in this organisation, and others in our parish have from time to time supported it with their expertise.

R1 000 – to African Enterprise. More than a token gesture, it is an expression of solidarity with this great Christian organisation begun by Michael Cassidy, parishioner here for over 40 years with his wife Carol and their family. AE remains headquartered in Pietermaritzburg but has spread throughout the African continent and is led by African church leaders, “Evangelising the Cities of Africa through Word and Deed in Partnership with the Church”.

### 2010 Funds

Funds on a proportional basis are already available to be distributed from our 2010 income, and Parish Council will soon deliberate on this.

It is a joy to give, and to express solidarity for the sake of the Gospel. We have been the recipients of so much, from God and from one another through the Grace of God. It is good to live in ways characterised by the Grace of God.

**On our church notice boards:  
Information about Michael Cassidy’s latest book,  
“So, You Want To Get Married?”  
Available in local Christian bookstores**

**A sermon preached by The Revd. Prof Ron Nicolson  
Church of the Ascension, Hilton  
23 Aug 2009**

**Paul – on love within marriage**

And we had the words of Paul about marriage. Now I know that sometimes we battle with Paul about marriage. Wives should regard their husband as they regard the Lord. Wives should submit to their husbands. I know these are painful words, words that have in fact done very much harm in the past and still do when they are used to justify the abuse of women.

But Paul was writing to a world that took the submissive role of women for granted. And to be fair to Paul, he did push the envelope, so to speak. To that world of male domination, where women were regarded as children or chattels, he said husbands must love their wives like Christ loves the Church, like Christ sacrificed his life for the Church. That was a new thought for his time. The love of a husband for his wife must not be domineering, but sacrificial and caring. The love between husband and wife is an earthly reflection of the relationship between Christ and his people. A happy marriage, a happy family, is like heaven. That's what we want.

But we don't always get them, do we? A happy nation. A happy family. The tragedy and agony of Baghdad. Of Kabul. Of Myanmar. Of North Korea. The tragedy and agony of a bad marriage, marriages where love has died, where there is infidelity or worse, where there is abuse, assault and even murder.

Of course these are extremes. Some of you may have experienced them. All of us will have lived through them to some extent. Thank God we're not in Baghdad. But even here we may be permitted to be a bit cynical about our national and local government. Thank God, perhaps, your marriage is or has been a peaceful and joyful one, but for most of us there have been times when our family life is stressful and unloving. And in those times we need God. And in those times, quite often, he feels furthest away.

**The Real Presence of Christ**

And that's the point of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. We come Sunday by Sunday to make it a habit, to associate the offering and receiving of bread and wine with the presence of Jesus whether we always feel his presence or not. We come, sometimes, with warm faith, and some times with dry, hurting and empty hearts and souls. But, like the naartjie and the kaneel in DJ Opperman's poem, as we receive them, the reality of Jesus' presence is brought home to us. The bread and wine are signs. The inner reality, the substance of the matter, is that Jesus is really and substantively and objectively here even at the times when he seems furthest away. "Draw near and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is given for you and for me."



**"My flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him or her." [John 6:51]**

Afrikaans is a lovely language for poetry. There is a poem by DJ Opperman that begins:

My nooi is in 'n naartjie,  
My ouma is kaneel.  
Daar's iemand... iemand in anys,  
Daars 'n vrou in elke gear.

Did you understand it? How's your Afrikaans? My love is in a naartjie, my granny's in cinnamon, there's someone in aniseed and a girl in every flavour. It doesn't sound the same in English, does it?

But the sentiment is still true. Don't you find that a smell, a scent, can suddenly take you back over the years to another place, another time, another person? I'm told that it's a particularly poignant part of packing up the clothes of a departed loved one. The scent recreates that old experience, that person from the past, as if the person was still there.

I peel a naartjie and remember the picnic with my first girl friend. I put a pinch of cinnamon on the pancake, and suddenly my heart is wrenched as I remember when I was a child and grandma was baking. Smells take us back to an absent love.

**A meal of remembrance**

The Eucharist has become the central thing, in fact almost the only thing, in Anglican worship. Of course the Eucharist should lie at the heart of our Christian journey. It's not a naartjie that reminds us of our absent love, but a meal: The bread, the wine, and the service of remembrance. This is my body. This is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.

I had a young parishioner, all of 5 years old, albeit a precocious 5 year old, who refused to come to church if there was going to be a Communion service. He knew it involved eating the body, drinking the blood, of Jesus. Like all 5 year olds his thoughts were still in the concrete cognition phase. He took words literally. And the idea was revolting to him. Jesus, in his mind, belonged in the cradle in Bethlehem. How could we eat him? And although our adult minds are dulled to it, it is a startling thought, is it not?

And the language of the gospel of John today lays it out in all its starkness. “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you will not have life in you.” Flesh. Blood. Of course we don’t take it quite as literally as my precocious young parishioner.

Anglicans like to use words like the Real Presence of Jesus in the bread and wine. Actually, to lay my Anglo-Catholic cards on the table I still prefer the term trans-substantiation. The substance of the ordinary bread and wine becomes the substance of the body and blood of Jesus. When Thomas Aquinas the great Christian philosopher used the term he meant it in a special technical way. The substance of a thing for Thomas had nothing to do with its physical properties. Substance didn’t mean what we might mean by the term – for Aquinas the substance of a thing had nothing to do with its physical properties, its look, its weight. Physically, scientifically if you like, the bread was still bread. Substance meant the significance of a thing, its inner nature.

In the Eucharist the bread and wine cease to be just food and drink. That is no longer their significance. They signify the presence of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ. That is their new substance.

Have I lost you with all these technicalities? Let me try it this way. Your body is not the real you. The real you is not plump and saggy, though that may be - I say may be - what we see. The real you is not bald and skinny with age spots and moles. That’s not your substance. The real you is your inner nature, your lovely self, that ever youthful ever beautiful person hidden underneath.

Only, because we are mortal, I cannot see your inner nature. I can’t see your substance. I have to take that for granted. What I see is your body. Your body is the assurance that the real you is alongside me. Your body is the outward and visible sign. You may wish that it was a more beautiful, a slimmer, a younger sign. But the real inward you with all its subtlety and richness and beauty, the substance of you, that we don’t see except with the eyes of faith.

### **The hidden reality beneath the sign of bread is the presence of Jesus...**

So in the Eucharist, when Jesus said, “This is my Body”, he meant, this is the outward sign. The bread we offer, break and eat, is our assurance that Jesus is here alongside me. The bread is the sign. The hidden reality beneath is the presence of Jesus.

And the blood? When we talk of blood, we can’t help but think of wounds and hurts and danger. “Look, Mum, it’s bleeding”, says the four year old when he wants you to know that his sore knee really hurts. And the eternal life that Jesus offers us was won at the cost of hurt, and wounds, and mortal death.

### **Jesus’ costly love reinforced**

As we drink the wine we think of his death and sacrifice. “This is my blood shed for you.” It is our assurance of his costly love. The wine is the sign. The hidden reality is the costly love of Jesus made present for us.

But, my precocious friend might have asked [and I’m glad he didn’t because he’s a hard arguer], “Surely Jesus is present all the time, wherever we are, whatever we do. Why talk of his presence in Communion. He’s there, he’s here, he’s everywhere.”

And of course he is. And sometimes we are very conscious of that. When we see the wonders of nature and the things God has made. When we experience the love of family and friends.

### **Always conscious of his presence?**

But sometimes, in fact quite often, we are not so conscious of his presence. Sometimes we’re too busy. We’ve got jobs to do, families to raise, and despite Brother Lawrence telling us that we should practice being aware of the presence of Jesus in every moment, it’s hard to do that when we’re sorting out screaming and squabbling children, it’s hard to do that when we’re rushing for late appointments at work, it’s hard to do when we’re worrying about the firm’s profits taking a down-turn with the economy.

Sometimes we’re too tired. Or too ill. It’s hard to be aware of the presence of God when we’re down at heart ourselves. I met someone in the supermarket a few days ago who has not been well and who said to me “I’ve been in a real spiritual desert for weeks now. I can’t pray. There’s no feeling that God listens.” Of course we might say that it is in those times of feeling down and ill that we most need God. But often it is in those times that God seems furthest away.

We were privileged today to hear the poem about the last words of King David. Looking back on his successful reign he says, or the poet says for him (I use the Jerusalem Bible translation).

He who rules with justice  
who rules in the fear of God  
is like the morning light at sunrise on a cloudless morning  
making the grass of the earth sparkle after rain.

A happy nation. A wise and godly ruler. And life seems like a beautiful spring morning. God’s in his heaven and all’s well with the world. That’s what we want.