

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

December 2017

Dear Friends,

It has been an eventful year in many ways here in South Africa. Just last night Cyril Ramaphosa was elected President of the African National congress (ANC) but we are not expecting any sudden change in ANC policy. We will wait and see if any action is taken against those whose corruption has ruined the South African economy. The State President announced free tertiary education in his outgoing speech to regain his dwindled popularity against the advice of his Finance Ministry. The bill is over 12 billion rand (7 billion pounds sterling) for one year and no budgetary provision has been made for this. Apart from stemming corruption, only tax increases will begin to cover this cost. If he remains as State President, he will have the onerous task of implementing this piece of economic folly. At least the students will rejoice as their parents have to dig deeper into their pockets to pay for this 'free' bonus through their tax bills. We earnestly pray Father Trevor Huddleston's prayer:

God bless Africa;
Guard her children;
Guide her leaders
And give her peace, for Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

July was the high point of the Faculty of Theology centenary celebrations and we hosted Prof Patrick Hornbeck (Dean of Theology at Fordham University, NY, USA) and Rev Patrick Bergquist, also from New York. After a day long colloquium, we were treated to a gala concert and dinner, hosted by the vice-Chancellor, Prof Cheryl de la Rey. The guest speaker was Prof David Ford of Cambridge University. The following morning Patrick Bergquist preached at St Andrew's church here in Pretoria.

We had another frenzied trip to the UK in September, catching up and seeing Sandra's aunt Nan who is now in a care home in Stonehaven very much against her will. We feel helpless living at such a distance. We were accompanied by friends Maleesh and Boss Tlhoale (good Lutherans) who were hosted by friends in Cumbernauld and Alva on their first trip to the UK.

This enabled us to catch up with friends and not bore them to death. We all spent a few days in Aberdeen with Sandra's cousin and her husband, also seeing old friends who Graham had missed earlier during his trip in March.

On our return, we once more hosted Joyce Bell and Caroline Izzat from Alva Parish church on what was their last trip to South Africa. They continue to support programmes in South Africa, particularly our orphans' project at Mamelodi.

This past fortnight, we have had a great visit from our friend Dave Ross from Aberdeen whose wife's sudden death cause Graham to go to the UK in March.

Graham continues to be busy with his work at the NRF and CHE as well as preaching regularly at St Andrews and teaching at St Augustine's College. His contract at Pretoria University has been renewed for another year so that will keep him busy with research and teaching. He is in charge at St Andrew's over the Christmas period as our minister, Zwai Mtyhobile, is on long leave, beginning after his and his wife, Thandi's birthday celebrations tomorrow.

As always, Sandra continues to provide the stability at home which allows for all these things to happen. She is constantly offering hospitality as well as continuing with her language editing work for students. Then there is her work with Violet Mashao at Mamelodi helping with the orphaned children's' feeding project.

Wishing you all a joyous Christmas and every blessing in the New Year!

Sandra & Graham