

Dear Friends,

Sandra has had an unusually busy spell of proofreading during the past few weeks. It is interesting how she has made this a pastoral task through forming relationships with the students who reveal an ever increasing amount of problems that affect their studies and their progress, especially towards the end as they prepare to submit their work for examination.

Graham is also busy, but has much more flexibility not being bound by submission dates for the most part. What he enjoys most is the sheer variety of the things he is involved in, so he never gets bored – he just switches to another task! His National Research Foundation work is one thing that doesn't go away until mid-December as they struggle to get the national rating of scholars done. It was seriously held up this year in a failed attempt to improve the system!

He is also on the Church Unity Commission Theological Education Sub-committee which is trying to formulate new approaches to theological education for Africa. This ecumenical venture shows how similar our processes are, yet how far we are from cooperating more closely, more efficiently and more cost-effectively.

Graham went to the UK in mid-July to attend the ordination of our friend Justin Taylor at Kirkcaldy: Abbotshall. Justin had been Graham's research assistant here at Pretoria University. Sandra joined him at the beginning of August in time for the wedding of her cousin's son in Glasgow where Graham officiated. It was a busy period trying, as usual, to try to catch up with family and friends. Just after we returned from the UK in August we had a visit from some of Sandra's family. Then we treated ourselves to a week in Mauritius with our friends, Stanley and Teshego Tau.

Christmas begins early for us here in South Africa as the school and university year ends and people begin to drift away from the city for the holidays. We had our Sunday School Nativity Pageant on 19 November, the day we also said goodbye to one of our elders Gen. Edna Joseph who is moving to the Cape on her retirement. The same afternoon we went to a Christmas concert of one of our favourite choirs, Palisander. The following week we ordained a new elder, Edwin Banda, whose family travelled from Zambia for the occasion. On 2nd December, the first Sunday in Advent, we traditionally have a set piece for the service. This year it was the Bach Cantata, followed by a congregational lunch, which was enjoyed by all. Graham continues to provide services once or twice a month at nearby St Columba's church, which is coming to the end of its vacancy. They have called Rev Craig Morrison whom we have known for some years.

Now we are looking forward to the arrival of our friend, Dave Ross from Aberdeen, who will spend the middle two weeks of December with us as he did last year.

We will be sending Christmas quietly with friends as Graham will be covering for our minister, Zwai Mtyhobile, at St Andrew's while Zwai works on his PhD thesis.

The weather has turned very quickly into summer and is very hot. The country's power supply is under serious threat and we endure all day power cuts (aka load-shedding!) of which there seems to be no end. Apart from that things continue as usual in a world beset by a multitude of problems of which there few easy solutions. Fortunately in our faith – hope springs eternal!

Have a good Christmas and New Year.

Best wishes!

Graham and Sandra



One of Graham's recent PhD graduates! The Rev. Julio Andre Vilanculos, centre, new vice chancellor of United Methodist University of Mozambique, is joined by Bishop Joaquina Filipe Nhanala and the Rev. Jamisse Taimo at an installation ceremony Sept. 20 in Morrumbene, Mozambique.