

December 2020

Dear Friends,

Well, it has been quite a year, but the good news is that most of us have survived and the resilience of the human spirit has been affirmed as essentially 'very good' as Godself proclaimed at the completion of the creation project! We have learned how to survive and even thrive, in the face of the worst global pandemic for six hundred years. Social distancing has been one workable response despite it forcing us to reassess how intimately we relate to one another. This is difficult in an African context; yet we persevere for the sake of one another. We reject the callousness of those who refuse to adopt social distancing measures in the name of affirming their human rights while infringing the human rights of others and avoiding responsible action. We rejoice in the discovery of a vaccine. We thank God for the commitment of those who endanger their own lives in order to help those in greatest need. We pray for patience as we work towards the restoration of a 'new' normality.

It is good to hear how many congregations here and in Scotland are managing to be innovative in the ways they continue to worship and maintain contact with members. We moved to Zoom services at St Andrew's but are now having open services with social distancing in addition to Zoom. Having a large church makes social distancing easier. However, people have been slow to return the church while they have returned to their work situations which have much poorer social distancing provision. Our financial situation has been seriously and negatively affected and we are preparing to contact our members to discuss stewardship issues with them. Today, 13 December, we have just had our service of nine lessons and carols led by our organist, Neil and a group of musical friends.

Our situation here in South Africa is not good, with rising numbers of infections, particularly in the Eastern Cape but, thankfully, our recovery rate is 93%. Deaths at the time of writing are just over 23,000. The Minister of Health has declared that we are now in the second wave of the pandemic.

We have not been affected too badly by restrictions ourselves as we are used to working from home. In some ways, we have established a 'new' normal by restricting our social contacts to one couple at a time and avoiding events where large numbers are congregating.

Sandra has been quite busy with language editing. We think this is due to the lockdown where students have had more time to get on with research.

She has been busy with our elder, Violet Mashao at Mamelodi. Thankfully, due to ongoing support from Scottish partners, particularly Cumbernauld Old and Brightons, we have been able to increase our involvement with the orphans' project at Mamelodi East congregation. These kids are a special risk at this time. The support given helps them understand that when all else around them is collapsing, the church is still there helping in times of great need, and that church means far more than the local congregation which nourishes them (see attached photos). One of our ministers in the St Andrew's team, Dr Fundiswa Kobo, a lecturer at the University of South Africa, has just been appointed minister at Mamelodi.



Graham has been busy at the Baptist Theological College, teaching and helping them rewrite their policies which need to comply with national educational standards. That involves a weekly trip too Johannesburg but the social distancing arrangements are excellent. His work continues at St Augustine's College with online teaching.

Along with his colleague from St Augustine's, prof Jakub Urbaniak, Graham contributed an article to a volume in memory of our late colleague, Rev Prof Vuyani Vellem who sadly died a year ago. Graham was deeply touched by the acknowledgement Jakub appended to his article:

The author would like to express his deep gratitude to Prof Graham Duncan – his mentor, colleague and dear friend – who introduced him to Prof Vellem, his work and Black Theology at large. One cannot doubt that God's grace is at work when a Scotsman inspires a Pole to study a Xhosa theologian and the mind-and-heart of the 'one in the middle' gets transformed in the process.

One of the unifying factors in the nation is the eJerusalema Challenge in which many schools, colleges, businesses churches and others including our own Church office and the Baptist College have participated (see text below and:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/w5snl7thcp17re9/WhatsApp%20Video%202020-12-12%20at%2009.50.56.mp4?dl=0>

You will look in vain for Graham. He attended the rehearsal but was not at the College in the day of the recording.

It is based on Psalm 122:3-4:

Jerusalem, a city built
compactly and solidly.
There the tribes went up, the tribes
of the Lord,
to give thanks to the name of the
Lord,
the duty laid on Israel.

and Revelation 21:1- 4:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had vanished, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne: 'Now God has his dwelling with humankind! He will dwell among them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain, for the old order has passed away!'

It offers a message from Africa of hope in a new order, where *iLondoloze* (the Protector of all living things) will save the people of his creation. This is interesting because it is normally the rest of the world that is giving Africa hope.

Other than that we are doing fine and wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

Graham & Sandra

Jerusalema

x2

Jerusalema ikhaya lami

Ngilondoloze

Uhambe nami

Zungangishiyi lana

x2

Ndawo yami ayikho lana

Mbuso wami awukho lana

Ngilondoloze

Zuhambe nami

Ngilondoloze ngilondoloze ngilondoloze

Zungangishiyi lana

Ngilondoloze ngilondoloze ngilondoloze

Zungangishiyi lana

Ndawo yami ayikho lana

Mbuso wami awukho lana

Ngilondoloze

Zuhambe nami

Ngilondoloze ngilondoloze ngilondoloze

Zungangishiyi lana

Ngilondoloze ngilondoloze ngilondoloze

Zungangishiyi lana

Jerusalem

x 2

Jerusalem, my home.

Rescue me,

Join me,

Don't leave me here!

x 2

My place is not here,

My kingdom is not here,

Rescue me!

Come with me!

Save me, save me, save me,

Don't leave me here,

Save me, save me, save me,

Don't leave me here!

My place is not here,

My kingdom is not here,

Rescue me!

Come with me!

Save me, save me, save me,

Don't leave me here,

Save me, save me, save me,

Don't leave me here!