

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Easter 2019

Dear Friends,

It is Easter Monday and we are in the midst of a rain storm – unusual for this time of year but very welcome. Graham conducted the Tenebrae Service at St Andrew's on Maundy Thursday, Zwai took the Good Friday service and we shared the Easter Day communion with baptism and a musical interlude from Neil and Chris, our organist and colleague. Attendance was good considering the fact that most of the congregation go home for Easter.

We have had a spate of ordinations recently. First was the ordination of Jonny Womack (Anglican), one of Graham's PhD students, as a deacon at St Alban's Cathedral across the road from St Andrew's. The bishop of Pretoria allowed Graham and Zwai to participate fully in the ordination. Then Graham participated in a historic ordination of Diane Willman, one of our St Augustine's students. Diane is part of the Roman Catholic Women Priests movement and she was ordained by her lady bishop. The ordination was uniquely different and Graham was involved in the laying on of hands. Then we had to miss the ordination of Bos Tlhoale (Lutheran), who with his wife Malish came to the UK with us two years ago. Our next ordination is at the end of June in the Diocese of Saldhana Bay north of Cape Town, where our friend of over forty years, Thembeke Mpako-Nutsi (Anglican), serves.

Ecumenical life, always much easier in South Africa than in Scotland, goes on with Graham's involvement at St Augustine's Roman Catholic College. Towards the end of January, he was approached by the Baptist Theological Seminary of South Africa to teach Church History which he is also finding immensely rewarding. We are not sure if ageing brings an element of ecumenical versatility with it but we are immersed in working together with other churches where possible creating deeper understanding?

Graham's contract was renewed at the University of Pretoria where he continues mainly doing research. He has also been appointed a research associate in the department where he did his Master's and Doctoral degrees at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Then there is his work with the Council for Higher Education and the National Research Foundation.

Twice recently, the Moderator of General Assembly asked Graham to act for him. The first was at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Correctional Services (prisons) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church to provide improved services for former prisoners. The second was to constitute the Association of Church Choir and Musicians which provides sterling service in the development of church music.

Apart from all this Sandra has been very busy with her language editing work and hosting visitors. First David and Chris came with their friends, Neil and Will. A day later our friend, Heather Clark arrived from Aberdeen. During their visit we suffered electricity blackouts the first of which was for 3 days. This served us with a real challenge for cooking and keeping food fresh as the temperatures were in the region of 35/37 degrees! Thereafter it was for two-and-a-half hours 3 times a day for the following two weeks.

The day after the boys left, Sandra's cousin, Helen, and her husband George arrived. The five of us spent the best part of a week at Sir Richard Branson's Rock Lodge in the Sabi-Sabi national game reserve. Arriving there was mildly traumatic as the dirt road was blocked by felled trees and rocks with just enough space to pass. On meeting some of the protestors we discovered that this was a service delivery protest, of which there are many spread throughout the country as the general election approaches. They pointed to a tar road which had been built for tourism while they remained after 25 years of democracy without water. This is a real injustice. Anyway, they directed us in a very good spirit to another gate at which we were able to enter the reserve. We had a lovely time and the game views were fantastic!

We pray for you during the forthcoming Brexit, whatever the result is!*Graham & Sandra*