

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Easter 2018

Dear Friends,

As always, Christmas came and went very quickly as has Easter. It has been a busy year so far, as always. Graham was in charge at St Andrew's over the Christmas period as Zwai took long leave to prepare his PhD proposal. It was a quiet period, thankfully.

Easter was to be more relaxing but Zwai had to go to the Eastern Cape for a family funeral and Graham had to take all of the Easter services: Thursday evening Tenebrae, Good Friday morning service and Easter Day communion. Fortunately, he was assisted by a young lady minister in the congregation, Rev Fundiswa Kobo, a theology lecturer at the University of South Africa and Dr Zoro Dube, a lecturer in New Testament Studies at Pretoria University. Zoro is the first academic probationer in the church and Graham was asked to be his supervisor. We knew his father, Phineas Dube in the 1980s at the Federal Theological Seminary. Phineas worked for Africa Enterprise, an evangelical organisation which was responsible for our orientation programme.

We are now taking our post-Easter break at our favourite hotel at Cathedral Peak, deep in the Drakensberg mountains where we have been holidaying after Easter for a number of years. It is very relaxing and great for relaxing and catching up as usual. We are here with two Lutheran friends, Bos and Malish Tlhoale, who travelled to the UK with us last year.

While Sandra continues with her editorial work and providing never-ending hospitality, Graham has been busy with a number of other activities.

His contract at the University was renewed and, in addition, he has taken responsibility for the first-year class on the History of Christianity aspect of the course in Theological Orientation. This is because the lecturer has been appointed the new Dean of the faculty and is no longer free to teach. This year's first-year class is over one hundred students which is our largest intake for some years. They are quite an energetic group! In addition, he is leading the Presbyterian class on Practical Formation. His research continues with regular requests to prepare papers on various issues, the latest being on 'The role of women in South African Presbyterianism'. Two of his Zimbabwean students, Farai Mutamiri, Dean of the Anglican Cathedral in Harare, and John Chawarika, rector in an Anglican parish in Harare have successfully completed their PhD degrees and will graduate at our autumn graduation later this month.

St Augustine's College also renewed his contract to teach there too and he continues his work on their Senate in the midst of many problems, not least financial.

This is Graham's last year as a member of the Religious Studies and Theology panel of the National Research Foundation. He continues his work with the Council for Higher Education and is busy assisting with the applications for registration of several colleges which have not registered their colleges or qualifications with the statutory bodies in South Africa. This is a complex matter. This arose out of his involvement with a sub-committee of the Church Unity Commission (CUC) in South Africa, which is considering issues and challenges in theological education nationally. The CUC has expanded the work of this sub-committee to include the Lutherans, the Dutch Reformed churches and Roman Catholics. We have also appointed a group of female theologians to assist us in our deliberations to make our work more inclusive.

On the home front we had a two-week visit from David and Chris in March, along with a month-long visit from an old friend from Aberdeen, Heather Clark. They were all in need of a break after (during?) the dreadful Scottish winter. This coming weekend we will see Justin Taylor with his family. Justin was our former student and Graham's research assistant. He has just completed his probation in the Church of Scotland successfully and is being considered for a call. If all goes well, Graham will attend his ordination during the summer before Sandra joins him for a family wedding in August.

At the national level, we have said goodbye to Jacob Zuma (Thanks be to God!) though he keeps on popping up not least for his trial on 16 charges of corruption. Then we have commiserated with the people of Cape Town in the midst of their ongoing drought. And most recently the nation is mourning the loss of struggle icon Winnie Mandela, whose enormous contribution to a democratic South Africa was eclipsed by her character and moral flaws, characteristics we all share as part of sinful humanity. As they say in revolutionary circles – *a luta continua!* – the struggle continues!

This comes with our prayers and Best Wishes!

Graham & Sandra