

June 2024 News from St Benedict's Priory

Our Order's annual Chapter gathering took place in South Africa for the first time, here at Volmoed in the first two weeks of June. While not all of our North American Brothers were able to come over, more than half did (we were able to include the remaining Brothers in the formal discussions and decisions by having hybrid meetings with online access). For most of the visiting Brothers, it was their first time in South Africa.

The gathering had a complicated start, when the flight from the USA was cancelled after everyone had boarded. Arrangements then had to be made in haste for alternative flights. Most of the Brothers came via a long layover in London, arriving at Volmoed on Wednesday 5 June in the afternoon. The remaining Brothers had a direct flight that arrived on the Thursday evening.

This of course meant that the early part of the Chapter schedule had to be rearranged, but after that things settled into place and everything else went smoothly. There were significant conversations, both formal and informal. We enjoyed fellowship around meals and around fireplaces. We walked the Volmoed property together and introduced visiting Brothers to Hermanus. There were several excursions to Cape Town and its surrounds. There was a road trip to visit the Holy Cross School the Order established on the property of our previous monastery outside Makhanda in the Eastern Cape. While there, the Brothers met several Associates from the community that had formed in relation to the monastery.

All of this allowed visiting Brothers to experience more of our context and situation for themselves. This will be very helpful as we consider the future possibilities for our Order's presence in South Africa during the years ahead. Brothers with intimate knowledge of the context here were elected to serve on the Order's Council for the next two years, in the persons of Brs Luc, Roger and Scott.

Brs Scott and Mpumelelo departed for the USA with our Superior Br Robert James a few days after most of the North American Brothers left us. Br Scott has been re-stationed to our Holy Cross Monastery after a number of years with our monastic community here. His many and varied contributions to our life and ministry will be missed. Br Mpumelelo will spend four months at Holy Cross Monastery as part of his initial monastic formation.

Br Luc has served as the Vocations Director for southern Africa for several years, dividing his time between South Africa and the USA. He has now been stationed to our community here, and we look forward to the contributions he will be able to make while spending longer periods of time with us.

Br Josias continues to deepen his relationship with the Ithemba centre in Zwelihle township. He recently accompanied a group from the centre to a Special Olympics event in Parow, Cape Town. Br Roger attended a Volmoed Council meeting which was followed by a workshop on future directions for Volmoed. We were pleased to have a group from the neighbouring Camphill community with us for a Sunday morning Eucharist.