

November 2023 News from St Benedict's

November saw two distinct improvements in the transport infrastructure affecting movement to and from Volmoed. First, a bridge over the nearby national road was repaired, allowing traffic to move along that road again, thus reducing traffic volumes that had made travel along the lengthy unpaved detour road not only unpleasant but dangerous. Second, movement along the main road through the bottom of the valley became possible again, once the single-lane bypass around the damage resulting from the storm of late September was completed.

The immediate benefit of these improvements, apart from ease of access to areas beyond the valley from Volmoed, was that people from those areas could once again come to Volmoed relatively easily. There has been a noticeable increase in attendance of the Thursday and Sunday morning church services since, with those who had found themselves unable to come to Volmoed after the storm expressing their delight at being here again.

The annual Volmoed Colloquium once again took place at the beginning of November. Those attending the Colloquium joined us for Vespers on the Friday evening and again for mass on Sunday morning, and several came to various chapel prayers in between. Br Josias and Mpumelelo attended some of the Colloquium sessions, while Br Scott preached on the Colloquium theme of Anxiety and Hope on Sunday morning. Br Daniel accompanied John de Gruchy to a pre-Colloquium workshop in Stellenbosch.

A woman who used to visit our monastery back in Makhanda (Grahamstown), and who knows Mpumelelo through his association with the Community of Jesus' Compassion in KwaZulu Natal, has relocated to the Western Cape. She came to spend a couple of nights at Volmoed, having discovered that we had relocated here. She had been a bit wary, given how different our situation is now, but in the end was very happy that she decided to spend her birthday praying with us in our new space.

Jens Zimmerman, a German theologian resident in Canada and who is the second Legacy Fellow, prayed with us regularly during his weeks at Volmoed. A small clergy group from Paarl archdeaconry joined us for some prayers during their retreat. A small international group from World Vision came to mass on Sunday morning during their workshop. We were pleased to welcome a sizeable group from the nearby Camphill community to their monthly attendance on a Sunday morning.

Br Daniel met with a small group on the local Pilgrimage of Hope and gave them a blessing. They then prayed with us at Vespers.

It was our pleasure to invite some from the Volmoed community including staff to celebrate our Founder's Day with us towards the end of November. A festal Eucharist in the main chapel at noon was followed by a fine catered lunch in the Volmoed dining room.

Br Edwin continues to be enriched by his time with the community at our Holy Cross Monastery in the USA. In addition to attending several novitiate classes per week and participating in work assignments, he has visited the nearby Orthodox community of New Skete and has attended several inter-novitiate formation programmes at other centres.