

November 2024 News from St Benedict's Priory

We were privileged to have the presence and input of Bp Dr Rowan Williams, a former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, at Volmoed during the first half of November. His deep spirituality humbly shared was much appreciated.

Bp Rowan provided input on the theme of *passions and freedoms* to the Volmoed Colloquium during the first weekend of November. Some of the colloquium group attended Vespers with the Brothers on the Friday evening, and most of the group attended the Eucharist on the Sunday morning. This was followed by the final colloquium session, during which Bp Rowan spoke about *freedom with* (dynamic relationships that welcome diversity by reframing questions) in addition to *freedom from* and *freedom for*.

During the following week, Bp Rowan provided input on the theme of the prophetic witness of the church today for a retreat that was offered at Volmoed. There were one or two input sessions each morning (they can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/@CrossingRivers2024/videos>), and a question-and-answer session after supper each evening.

Part of the prayer framework for the retreat was provided by the Brothers in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. It was good to share meals with the other retreat participants, and to get to know something of the diversity of people who were drawn to Volmoed for the week.

On the Friday evening after the retreat, Bp Rowan gave a public lecture on art and faith at the Hermanus municipal auditorium, during which his capacity to speak meaningfully on a broad range of topics was all the more evident.

In the days following the retreat, we were pleased to host Bp Rowan to a couple of meals with conversation. We also enjoyed his company at a social gathering that brought the weekend to a close. Br Daniel accompanied Bp Rowan and John de Gruchy to visit an Afrikaans Orthodox church in Robertson on the Monday.

It was good to have Bp Rowan with us at many of our chapel prayers, and especially to have him celebrate so graciously at one of our Eucharists.

At the other end of the month, we were pleased to host the Volmoed staff and members of the residential community to the annual celebration of our Founder's Day. This year, it was a special treat to have Theo and Annalise Hendricks join us all the way from the west coast, Annalise having been a faithful Associate of Holy Cross for many years (Theo is an Anglican priest who used to visit the Grahamstown monastery regularly). A festal Eucharist in the main chapel (which can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/FOfelwRgvjU?t=400>) was followed by a fine catered lunch in the dining room.

Br Aelred participated in the first weekend session of an online spiritual direction course hosted in the USA (which made the timing of the classes something of a challenge). Br Josias left after the Volmoed retreat for a couple of weeks visiting friends in the Eastern Cape, and also visiting our Holy Cross School and visiting some Associates.

Br Luc, in his role as the local formator, is journeying with Br Mpumelelo towards the end of his novitiate, preparing him for life under vows. Br Roger participated in a meeting of the Order's Council, which included interviewing Br Mpumelelo in response to the latter's formal request to make initial profession of the monastic vow.