

## September 2023 News from St Benedict's

Any reflection on events of the past month cannot but be dominated by the astonishing aftermath of the storm that swept through the Western Cape during the night of Sunday 24 September. Roads were extensively damaged, bridges washed away, electricity and water supplies disrupted. The region in which Volmoed is situated continues to grapple with the impact. Road access remains constrained with real concern of it deteriorating further. Several communities have not yet had their electricity supply restored, while some communities are still physically isolated. Water supply to towns and suburbs remains limited.

On Volmoed we have been relatively well off. The level of water in the river rose significantly, and the main access road was flooded, leaving considerable amounts of debris behind when the water level dropped again. Thankfully, no buildings were flooded or otherwise badly damaged. Our electricity supply was restored by the Wednesday. The main pump for the water system is still serviceable. We are grateful. We do have to make a substantial detour along a now much busier gravel road in order to get to town and shops.

Br Daniel led a retreat in the first week of September for 40 clergy with their Bishop-elect from the Anglican Diocese of George at the Carmel retreat centre near the city of George in the Western Cape. The retreat was a good experience for all, and Br Daniel found the interactions stimulating. Our relationship with that diocese has certainly been strengthened as a result.

After the George Diocese retreat, Br Daniel continued to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), where he participated in a Trustees meeting for the Society of the Precious Blood, assisting Sr Elaine SPB in that process. Visitors to Volmoed might well find Br Daniel in the office some afternoons, as he is volunteering to assist there from time to time, which will increase our monastic community's presence for the guests who come to Volmoed.

The Superior of our Order, Br Robert James, has been with us for his annual visitation. He arrived on 11 September. Apart from the official visitation, which supports the integrity of the life of the local monastic community, Br Robert taught an intensive course of Novitiate classes, on aspects of monastic history. He also preached at a Volmoed Thursday communion service, on one of the themes of the Season of Creation.

When Br Robert departs on 5 October to return to our Holy Cross Monastery in the USA, Br Edwin will accompany him. Br Edwin will join the community there for four months, participating fully in the life of that Novitiate. We are confident it will be a good experience for him, and a significant part of his monastic formation. Please keep Br Edwin in your prayers.

Br Josias was away in Lesotho for a long weekend. He represented our monastic community at the final profession of a Brother of the Society of the Sacred Mission.

Clergy from the Constantia Archdeaconry made a retreat at Volmoed. While here, they immersed themselves in our Benedictine rhythm of daily prayer. Various members of the monastic community made themselves available during their retreat for individual meetings that provided opportunity for the clergy to talk about their lives and ministries with someone who would listen attentively.

Brothers from our monastic community also accompanied individuals on retreat and met with some who showed up at Volmoed hoping to find someone to listen to their lives.

We were again pleased to welcome members of the neighbouring Camphill community who attended the Sunday morning Eucharist at the beginning and end of the month. In the latter case, that was just before the storm hit, isolating the Camphill community for several days and depriving them of electricity supply for more than a week. Please keep them in your prayers as they recover from the effects of the storm.