



# THE CHALLENGE

ST COLUMBA'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

*In thanking everyone for their contributions to The Challenge, we may want to reflect a moment on how important communication is.*

*Recent tragic events in our country have been exacerbated by a perceived lack of communication from leaders, and left many feeling like rudderless boats on stormy waters. On the other hand, our Olympians' achievements were communicated 24-7 around the world and millions of people were thrilled to see both able-bodied and physically challenged champions showing us what true courage is.*

*These examples serve to highlight just how important communication is – in our relationships with others; in our work; and in our communities.*

*Chunky's message about "the elephant in the room" bears thinking about: Each of us truly has the power, through communication, to effect change and to uplift or to harm. Each of us has the power to choose words that can positively or negatively affect an outcome. Perhaps what is needed in all areas of our lives is some real communication, more positive input – and a little careful thought about the words we use.*

*A beautiful narration by the Late Sir Laurence Olivier says: ". . . your words carry with them chain reactions, like a stone that is thrown into a pond. If your thinking is in order, your words will flow directly from the heart, creating ripples of love . . . Choose your words with care. Go forth with love."*

*Let's keep communicating . . .*

*Bridget Badenhorst  
Editor & Head of Communication*



## **SPRING HAS SPRUNG!**

Dear St. Columbians

By the time you read this edition of The Challenge, summer will be upon us and the festive season just around the corner.

Rather than going into hibernation during the cold winter months, as our illustrious minister did when he went to Europe, the various committees have been very active as you will see when you read The Challenge.

Ringin' in spring was a complete makeover of our office furniture, thanks to John Hare. The old furniture has been donated to one of our outreach projects. Please visit the offices to see how great they look.

All our committees are functioning well and our finance committee is keeping an eagle eye on the finances. The newly-formed strategic planning committee will look at how we position our church in years to come and to ensure it's sustainability. This will necessitate some Blue Sky thinking and if you believe you are being lead to serve on this important committee please contact convener John Hare.

I am grateful that Ken McArthur has recovered well and has resumed his portfolio as convener of the board of management, freeing up Graham Hamilton to concentrate on finances and Nicarela. We sincerely thank Graham for all he did during this time.

As I mentioned earlier, all our committees are doing a great work and excelling in what we do best - serving our community.

God Bless  
Ernie Blom  
Session Clerk

# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Dear Friends,

I am sure just about all of us have heard (or used) that well known expression “the elephant in the room”. For those who are not too sure as to its meaning, it pertains to an obvious issue that needs to be spoken about, but no one wants to raise it. In couples counselling it may well refer to the different expectations that each individual has of the other. It may relate to parents or parents-in-law; it is a difficult issue that few want to bring to the table, yet has to be spoken about. Well, this month I thought it would be good to talk about “our elephant in the room.”

When I was overseas, I noticed with sadness just how empty many of the churches that I attended were. I don't think I went to any worship service where there were more than fifty people at worship on a Sunday morning. I then had the natural response and patted myself on the back in a congratulatory style, marvelling at how we at St. Columba's have managed to keep our attendance figures at

reasonable levels. It was then, at an Executive meeting of the Session, that some of the members of the meeting began to talk openly about our shrinking attendances at Sunday worship. The convenor of the Worship Committee showed us statistics that indicated that we at St. Columba's had some time ago began to have a noticeable reduction in those attending church on Sunday.

I then applied my mind to that and remembered when I first arrived here almost nineteen years ago. Alan and Granville would be very upset if, on a Communion Sunday, seven hundred people had not attended church. A couple of years later, Alan and I set the benchmark at five hundred; and over the last ten years or so we have seen that number decline even further. In today's climate, we are really lucky if we get three hundred people in church on a Communion Sunday. On any other Sunday that number is approximately two hundred and fifty. So there is and has been a steady decline. The question is, why?

# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

CONTINUED

I am not sure I have the answer to this vexing question. For some it may be the preaching standard; for others it may be that Sundays are just too filled with doing things one can no longer do during the week; for others still it may just be the perfect family day or that this is the one day they have to rest.

This problem may also be manifesting because we live in a very different world to eighteen years ago. Perhaps it is because we no longer think it is important to go to church any more. If we know that God is a God of love and a God of grace, we accept that gladly and willingly and will help the church whenever help is required - but don't really see the need to attend worship. There may even be many more reasons than these few I have mentioned. If I were to do my doctorate all over again, this may well be one area that I would like to investigate a little further. You can heave a huge sigh of relief - I am not starting another doctorate, but I would

love to hear from you why you think people no longer see church attendance as relevant to their faith or perhaps, faith relevant for the times in which we live.

I would so appreciate some feedback from you. Let's recognise the "elephant in the room" and then slowly begin to talk about its presence. The real problem for all of us is that if we are unable to change the current trend, we may well be watching the end of Christian worship as we once knew and experienced it. If that is true, what is it that we are going to leave for our children and their children? Is faith and/or worship becoming less and less significant to future generations?

Please let me know what you think. This is our "Challenge."

Your friend and minister  
Chunky

# A MESSAGE FROM STEPHEN

**Providing vision and direction is one of the primary responsibilities and challenges of the Church. Faith communities have always made significant contributions to the makeup of societies, and for almost 2000 years, the Church has been involved with the rise and fall of great civilisations in the West.**

St. Columba's, as part of the Church in Johannesburg, has been wonderfully equipped with women and men of vision and moral fortitude and their contribution to Johannesburg, South Africa and even further afield, has been magnificent!

In just 90 years, St. Columba's has watched Johannesburg grow and flourish and she has also watched and wept as Governments and militias have torn her people apart. She witnessed the rise and demise of apartheid, she watched the horror of 9/11, tsunamis and earthquakes, she has endured a global economic crash and she is navigating the aftermath of a global recession.

They say "a week is a long time in politics". Well keeping up with that kind of change and dynamism, especially in a congregation like ours, is exciting and it provides spectacular opportunities.

Challenges like these can only be met through the thoughtful and truly visionary contribution of leaders. Here at St. Columba's, the late Keith and Pat Comins foresaw the potentially devastating effects that the isolation of political and social

sanctions would have on a recalcitrant South Africa.

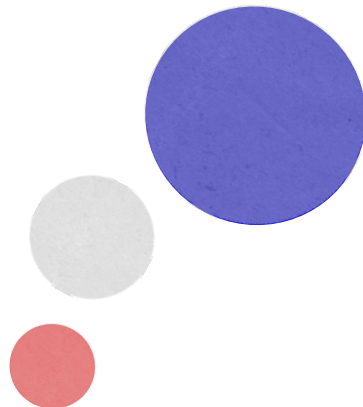
Through their insight and provisioning, a programme was endowed with the responsibility of inviting leading thinkers in the Church, from around the world, to come and share insights on the cutting edge of doing church in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Through this magnificent gift, we as a congregation have revelled in a privilege offered to very few. We have sat at the feet of some of the foremost theology scholars in the world: Old and New Testament, systematic and practical theology, history, sociology and psychology. Their insights and shared perspectives have sparked our imagination and fired us.

We have taken our place in this remarkable country at the southernmost tip of Africa and you, as a member of this congregation and of South African society participate in providing vision and direction through your family, your working relationships, and your social circles.

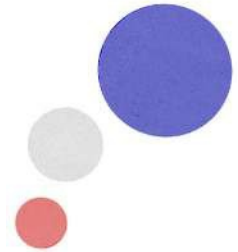
I would wager that most of us underestimate the value of that contribution. We too easily forget that this faith community began with

**"A WEEK IS A  
LONG TIME IN  
POLITICS"**



# A MESSAGE FROM STEPHEN

## CONTINUED



a handfull of powerless peasants in a back-water province of a marginalised country in the Roman Empire.

Never underestimate the mysterious power of God's love and grace shared lavishly among just a few people – it has been the source of non-violent revolution and the harbinger of a radically new kingdom.

With the visit of Dr Dane and Rachel Sherrard, we give thanks for the vision of Keith and Pat Comins, and also for the sacrifice of all of the St. Columba's lecturers. We salute them and their magnificent contribution to us becoming "... a community where the best of Presbyterian tradition courageously embraces inclusivity, innovation and open-minded conversation in Christian service. "

Your friend and minister,  
Stephen

## CHOIR

### SINGING OUR COMMITMENT TO FAITH AND FRIENDS

Our small family of singers continues to reap the rewards of providing a choral component to worship services. We are a happy bunch, which is to say, that's how we look!

Singers mostly are of this type - they exude confidence in association with each other which belies the angst over new music to learn and the time made available to do it in. Concerts draw them into delivery but nerves about the whole issue bubble in the tummy. It might be thrilling in some ways, to expose your gifts with a touch of vanity, herding yourself into the unknown of others' opinions - except that we are in the habit of musical praise and our function contributes



to the quality any parishioner (or other visitor), can take from us, as a product of our commitment to faith and friends.

We gather with the intention of partaking in a musician's composition, navigating their intentions with our style and capacity. But it is true - there is Glory to be taken from singing

well, to the pleasure of those who listen. It cannot be denied that we get a wee boost from providing some goodness, with at least a little skill. And that we go away with it, bringing it back to the next rehearsal, where once more we expect to be re-tutored and refined. Within this

# CHOIR

## SINGING OUR COMMITMENT TO FAITH AND FRIENDS

### CONTINUED

cycle of provision, we exist - to celebrate the workings of the Spirit among ourselves and our purveyors in the pews!

To those who have considered singing as a function of spiritual replenishment and who need the motivation to make practice possible, we are all there to give you courage. We want you to join our ranks because the sherry might never taste as

sweet in the company of others and you will expose yourself to companionship you didn't think possible, as Kevin gives you the glare! We are glad to sing - it is that simple.

Richard Gush  
Chairman – Choir



## Board of Management and Finance Report

Financial success for St Columba's is the result of doing everything else correctly. Indeed it is a complete and virtuous circle, in that the result of the wonderful financial support the church receives from the congregation and others enables us to continue the special work carried out through St Columba's.

I am glad to report that the financial position of the church at the end of our 2012 financial year was considerably better than projected. We finished strongly from both an income and expenditure

point of view. Having budgeted a deficit in excess of R180 000, strong financial management and a close control on expenses cut the deficit to R45 000.

Our cash flow position has too been well managed and enhanced by virtue of a large bequest during the year. This has helped considerably in clearing debts and other obligations and left the church in a strong financial position for 2012/13.

This year started well with better income and lower expense than envisaged.

### STEWARDSHIP

We are making progress with our Stewardship Appeal and had received net pledge indications of R3 067 591 by the end of August 2012. Follow-up letters were sent to all non-responders on 16 July but the increase in pledge indications resulting therefrom has been relatively small.

A pledge income target of R3 300 000 was set for the 2012/2013 Stewardship Year to March 2013 but my best estimate at this stage is that we can expect our pledge income in the Stewardship Year to 31 March 2013 to reach about R3 150 000. The Church's budget, which reflects a deficit, is based on the latter figure.

We are in the process of loading Stewardship data on to our database, which has proved to be a very time consuming exercise and not without the odd hiccup. As a result of the extent of time taken to get the information uploaded our normal procedure of writing to donors early in October setting out and thanking them for their actual gifts as reflected in our records may be slightly delayed. We do not want to go ahead until we are satisfied that all information on the new database is correct and that the database produces accurate Stewardship reports.

A big thank you is once again due to all donors from the Ministers, Exco, the Session and the Board of Management for your wonderful involvement. Please continue to support St Columba's to the extent you can whether that be through attendance, bringing potential new members to worship with us, giving under our Stewardship Programme or the use of your time and talents to further the work of St Columba's.

Richard Clowes - Convenor: Stewardship Committee



## News from the Pastoral Committee

Firstly, we welcome Ivor Evans to our committee. He has long and meaningful experience in industry as well as church matters. We look forward to his contribution to the pastoral care of our congregation. Kit Bradford, our secretary, is at present recovering from illness so Elizabeth Schreuder is taking care of the secretarial duties. We wish Kit a speedy recovery and look forward to her resuming her much valued presence at our meetings.

The routines of the committee - hospital visiting, sending get well cards to people on the prayer list, accompanying our ministers on communion visits - continue on in a satisfactory manner, thanks to Lorna Riddet, Gael Forbes and Don Pistorius.

The bi-monthly newsletter LINK, which is posted to our senior members who are not in e-mail communication with us, has now been underway for almost a year. It is edited by Paul Hardingham and distributed from the office under the care of Pauline Shelver. The purpose of LINK is to keep our senior members in touch with the many ongoing activities of St Columba's. At present it is distributed to 153 members.

A new initiative of the committee is that of setting up an innovative procedure to

welcome visitors to our services in a warm, hospitable manner. The procedure will include an appropriately margined Visitors Book, which will be managed at the entrance of our church by an elder. It is intended that the information obtained from the book will be used to provide a verbal welcome at an appropriate stage of the service.

Additionally, we are looking at ways of improving the interaction between our members and visitors after our services. A tasty coffee/tea service supplemented by the presence of senior members of the congregation may well encourage such interaction.

However, these are still early days in bringing the above initiatives to the implementation stage. While the committee is giving much thought and consideration to the matters, we welcome thoughts and ideas from our congregation.

If you would like to contribute, please get in touch with any of the members of the committee.

Ron Schreuder  
Convenor

*The committee's composition is now as follows:*

**Elna Blom, Ivor Evans, Gael Forbes, Stan Hayden-Smith, Don Pistorius, Lorna Riddet, Ron Schreuder, Alan Sharp, Rev Stephen van Schalkwyk, Lorna Wybrow**

## Worship Committee



We are entering a busy period in the church calendar as we progress towards the end of the Christian Year on Sunday 25 November, which is celebrated as Christ the King. We then move into the four Sundays in Advent which lead up to Christmas.

Special Services in the near future:

21 October - World Food Day

28 October - Reformation Sunday

4 November - All Saints Day

11 November - Remembrance Sunday

25 November - Christ The King

World Food Day is celebrated globally every year in October, marking the anniversary of the foundation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in 1945. The aim is to increase awareness, understanding and informed year round action to alleviate hunger.

The Pantry is a St Columba's effort to take food to those in need and we will focus on World Food Day on the nearest Sunday which is 21 October (Communion Sunday).

We especially appeal to all members of the congregation to please bring Non Perishable food items to the church office during the week ahead of the services on that day so that we can create a display on the 21 October.



If you are unable to bring donations ahead of the services you are of course welcome to bring them to the services on the Sunday. Please

support this as it is one of the ways we can give thanks for the food that is so readily available to us.

# MEET THE ELDERS



## DR KIRSTEN WELCH

Kirsten studied medicine at Wits University after leaving school and graduated initially with a MB BCh, then worked at a rural hospital for several months. She returned to Johannesburg and went into private practice as a General Practitioner and completed her Masters Degree in Family Medicine (M Fam Med). She was ordained an Elder at St Columba's in 2009 and sings Soprano in our choir. Kirsten is also a member of the Johannesburg Symphony Choir, directed by Richard Cock. She enjoys reading, travel when time permits and family activities with her two children.

# Parkview Charity Christmas Market

## 30 Nov to 2 Dec 2012

George Hay Park, Parkview  
45 Lurgan Road, [www.nicarela.org.za](http://www.nicarela.org.za)

Live music, big screen sports, kids fun, beer tent, champagne & oysters bar

ICE PROJECT

Kathy Raven  
Josie Field

LIFE  
Cameron Bruce



## PROPERTY

The Property committee under the leadership of Neill Davies has been busy and this will continue into the new financial year.

### Project completed are:

- The refurbishment of Spine, the caretaker's room.
- The service kitchen in the hall
- Electrical compliance across our buildings

- Refurbishment and repairs to the Manse
- Various carpentry items – cupboards and shelving

### New Project listed:

- Dalziel House
- The Church kitchen refurbishment
- Philemon's quarters
- Special polishing of the church floor
- Stonework care

A capital expenditure budget is being drawn up to cover all these items to ensure that the daily activities of the organisation can continue and flourish.



## OUTREACH AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Nelson Mandela Day epitomises the reason we need structures like Outreach. It is the physical manifestation of our evangelism at St Columba's. It creates opportunities and acts as a channel to get the congregation and community involved and mobilised to spread the Kingdom of Heaven right down here on Earth.



There is no doubt that 18 July is a very special, unique and powerful day: It is a special day as it is the birthday celebration of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela; and it is also a special day as it celebrates the philosophy of this extraordinary icon, who mesmerised and inspired us with his example. He devoted his life to the service of humanity and to humanity's freedom and peace.

It is a unique day, encouraging everyone to spend 67 minutes of their time on a specific day helping the world just as Nelson Mandela spent 67 years of his life fighting for freedom. I read an article on the web recently that made me contemplate this even more. It said: "If we live to be 70 years old, we get roughly 613,200 hours to live. That is 365 days x 70 x 24 hours. This is the time we have to enjoy, to love, to weep, to learn and to cry. The quest for the 'good life', for the meaning, the fulfilment and purpose must fit into this average number of hours. But we spend a lot of our time doing other things, things we have little choice in, and so don't pay much attention to. But if we start to look at these things we spend so much of our time on we might think again about our priorities."

Consider that of the top 10 things we do in our life is watching TV, eating, talking, reading, travelling and sleeping. Then consider that Nelson Mandela Day asks that you only spend 0.01% of the 525,960 minutes you have a year to help someone else. In the greater scheme

## OUTREACH AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE CONTINUED

of things, this is so insignificant - but consider that this equates to more than 325,694,444 days of helping those that need help desperately if everyone does it. Amazing what the world can do if we all work together.

Therefore, it is a powerful day – not only celebrated all over the globe, but actually calling for action from every single individual to make the world a better place by “service to one’s fellow human”. The change that is called for is in our hands!

Thank you to all the Outreach members and volunteers that live and celebrate Nelson Mandela Day every single day and week and month and year.

Thank you to the congregation that so actively participate by means of the donations and gifts that we receive every day.

I hope that Nelson Mandela Day will inspire more people to be like you.

Michelle von Benecke – Convenor





## HUMAN RESOURCE

I am glad to report that Corrie Cloete has taken charge of this portfolio and brings to us his extensive experience in an area in which we have had a gap for some time.

It is important to mention that the business management of the church is in the hands of a sound and experienced team which I am privileged once again to lead. Our objective is to ensure that St Columba's continues delivering service to the community as we have always done. My special thanks go to Graham Hamilton who so willingly and ably held the reigns of the board while I was indisposed.

Most sincerely  
Ken McArthur

## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Our group meets in Dalziel House on the second Monday of each month at 10.00am.

We currently have seventeen members. We continue to help St Columba's in various ways. Any monies raised from cake sales or funeral tea catering, goes to Gateway, Baragwanath Comforts Committee, Bethany, Woodside Sanctuary, Faith for Daily Living and Key School.

Two ladies open the monthly meeting with devotions and we thank God for the special fellowship shared by our group and would always welcome new members.

# M+WIG

2013

Coming to the end of another successful year with M+WIG, Ron and Paul and got together and now have an outline for 2013. No fixed dates, no bookings yet, but roughly what we want to do. And, as we always say, “we are going anyway so if you want to tag along, you are very welcome”.

## **SPRING 2013 A TOUR OF SHOWGARDENS OF THE INNER SUBURBS**

There are some truly beautiful gardens in Johannesburg and the owners are only too happy to show them off to you. We hope to line up a couple, maybe with a guide, when the gardens are at their loveliest.



## **WINTER 2013 FREEDOM PARK**

We have had such good reports of this monument to democracy that we feel we must go there. It was a key presidential project in 2001 and served as a response to the need identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for symbolic reparation of past conflicts in the history of South Africa. In 1994 Nelson Mandela said, “The day should not be far off when we shall have a people’s shrine, a Freedom Park, where we shall honour with all the dignity they deserve, those who endured pain so we should experience the joy of Freedom”. Freedom Park is such a place.



## **AUTUMN 2013 ONE OF TWO POSSIBILITIES**

### **1. TOUR OF A NEWSPAPER PRINTING WORKS**

Be present when they are printing the Star or the Sunday Times. Hear the roar of the printing presses, smell the printing ink, see the editorial team at work and watch the papers being distributed.

### **2. TOUR OF THE SABC**

Visit the sets of the “soapies” and see them being made. Watch the news broadcasts going out and hear of the long (and sometimes perilous) history of the Corporation. More on these later.



# M+WIG

2013

## STAYAWAYS



**JANUARY/FEBRUARY  
2013  
STERKFONTein  
NATURE RESERVE  
AND DAM**

Good accommodation, excellent birding, some game and top-class fishing.

**MARCH/APRIL 2013  
LITTLE EDEN**

Little Eden near Cullinan is a magnificent game reserve not far away and good accommodation. We will probably stay for four nights, Monday to Friday. We are starting now to secure accommodation as this place is always fully booked.



**SEPTEMBER/OCTO  
BER  
2013**

**MILWANE GAME  
RESERVE  
SWAZILAND**

Yes M+WIG is going cross border! This is a lovely reserve with the usual game but superb birding. Just inside Swaziland, the accommodation is excellent and we will spend four nights there, so get your passport up to date!

**PAUL HARDINGHAM - 011 462 96892 / 082 445 5413  
RON TIMM - 011 802 3687 / 082 979 9252**