

## **St Thomas Church Rondebosch**

### **Rector's Report to the Annual Vestry Meeting 7 March 2019**

#### **Introduction**

St Thomas Church Rondebosch will be celebrating the 155<sup>th</sup> year of its existence in 2020 as a place of Anglican Christian Worship, Ministry, Mission and Service. It is well and truly on its way to its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 45 years' time. Many, if not most of us will no longer be around. But by then the world would have changed beyond recognition. As the rector over the past Ten years, together with you, we have been hard at work to make a contribution to ensuring the future survival of this parish. In the changed circumstances of our time it has been no walk in the park as Christians have become fair game for the attraction of Modern Churches. There has been no lack of openness to new ideas, trying new and innovative things and making necessary improvements where we could. 2018 turned out to be particularly debilitating for the Parish. Reverend Lorna Lavarello-Smith completed her time with us in June, Alex Nagel, our Youth Administrator resigned a few weeks later, Reverend Nicky Ing moved to Noord Hoek in August and the Rector's impending retirement a few months down the line loomed large. So now we are at a juncture where it is not the time to innovate but to consolidate, as the parish prepares to journey into a new future in 2020.

#### **Taking Leave of Curates, Assisting Clergy and Duties**

In January 2018 I had the privilege of instituting Rev Reeva Mulder as the Tenth rector of the "Parish of St Paul's Rondebosch." It was a historical occasion. The parish celebrating the 186<sup>th</sup> year of its existence, it's "Feast of Title," "The Conversion of St Paul, New Rector, First person of colour, First woman Priest." Whichever way you look at it, it was an occasion that will forever be recorded as part of the future history of St Paul's our mother church. Rev Reeva's formation here at St Thomas played a significant role in preparing her for the important responsibility placed on her shoulders. It is in a way St Thomas giving back to Paul's. We pray God's continued blessing on her ministry.

In July I had the privilege of licensing Rev Lorna Lavarello-Smith as the new Chaplain to Herschel Girls School. Having served on the Herschel School Council and having had firsthand experience of her ministry, especially her passion for the youth here at St Thomas among other things Rev Lorna was an excellent choice for the chaplaincy ministry to staff and students at the school. We benefitted significantly from her ministry and her particular gifts which brought her

to us. Had it not been for St Thomas, Herschel Girls School may very well have missed the opportunity of recruiting her and benefitting from her chaplaincy.

Rev Nicky Ing has joined St Margaret's Church Fish Hoek, a parish replete with many retired but active clergy. Her ministerial gifts have however been recognized and she has been offering quiet days there. Rev Nicky is sorely missed but she is not entirely out of the loop and has agreed to continue offering quiet days here at St Thomas and has helped with a memorial service when I was on leave.

I resigned as the Chair of CLARAF (clergy and layworkers retirement accommodation fund), from the Herschel School Council and the Board of the American University of Nigeria (no more all-expenses paid business class trips to Yola, Lagos, Abuja, New Orleans and Washington D C), also no COTT and UWC lectures at present. Archbishop Thabo has however appointed me "Manager of Provincial Synod 2019." Archdeacons are required to hand back their licenses when a new bishop is in office. Elective Assembly is set for 25-27 July and the Consecration the end of October this year. Some consideration was given by Diocesan Chapter to place a curate from college at St Thomas this year but with my pending retirement it did not seem prudent.

### **Some Parish Highlights**

In terms of specially invited clergy we were blest to have Rev. Dr. Ronald Philips, the Senior Priest of the Diocese of False Bay as our guest preacher at the Patronal Festival. Fr Ron was everything one could expect from a seasoned preacher, teacher and pastor. I was very grateful that Bishop Margaret Virtue was prepared to release him to come and minister to us on the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle. It turned out as we hoped a splendid St Thomas Parish Family occasion, rounded off with the lovely fellowship and meal in the hall.

November last year we had the great joy of Bishop Garth Counsell licensing seven new lay ministers namely: Alex Kirsten, Angela Rackstraw, Anne Stevens, Andrea De Vos, Robin De Vos, Lucia Earl and Mark Solomon. We are grateful that they have responded to the Lord's call on their lives to serve him at St Thomas through this important ministry. An important focus of our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations was to set in motion a process of raising up the next generation of parishioners and leaders, who are deeply committed to Christ and willing to make the sacrifices necessary to serve the Lord through getting involved in our church life. The

licensing of the new lay ministers was a step in this process. May the Lord bless you and enrich the congregation through your leadership.

We used the occasion of the licensing to express a warm parish thank you to Bishop Garth for his Episcopal ministry with his imminent retirement and to his wife Marion for her support of his ministry. We blessed them with a special St Thomas gift and had a splendid parish meal in the hall to round off the occasion.

### **Facing the Challenges of Youth Ministry**

St Thomas has a long history of challenges related to effective, sustained Youth ministry which predates my arrival here. Nothing has gripped us, vexed and consumed us more at St Thomas over past ten years, than giving high priority to finding a suitable Sunday School Superintendent/Youth Leader/Youth Pastor/Youth Administrator to assist with growing and developing our Junior Church and Teen Church by reaching out to young families. Our 2014 Patronal Festival marked the official launch of a year and beyond of intentional prayer. We prayed intentionally for two years and more for the Lord to raise up a suitable young person to take on this mission. We intensified our prayer with the wonderful 12 hour "Prayathon Day" (7 March). The careful thought, preparation of the church, prayer material, visual symbols and music helped us to focus on our areas of need especially for the Junior Church, Teen Church, and Young Adults. Caroline Westwood, Melanie McLachlan, Jenny Shepherd and Alex Davidge were praised and thanked for the effort they invested to make the "Prayathon" work so well. The appointment of Luis Barbeitos, a faithful and regular communicant of our Church and the arrival of Rev Lorna Laverello-Smith and her husband Drew Smith, were the outcome of those prayers. With the changes and challenges we now face, we are grateful that Drew and Melanie are keeping the home fires burning with ministry to J (Jesus) Walkers, Music and Worship for Family Services, Kids for Christ (KFC) and Messy Church. While in the Junior Church we are thankful for the long serving dedicated core of teachers Peter Hyslop, Anne Kathan, Olivia Fair and Jenny Shepherd have been the mainstay of the Junior Church. They are assisted from time to time by additional teachers who come on board for short periods of time for which we are very grateful. We have a dedicated core team who ensure that Messy Church continues. We are grateful for the Messy Church ministry exercised by Caroline Westwood, Alex Davidge, Chantel Chafda, Anne Stevens and Judy Paul.

The huge international Cape Town 2019 Taize Pilgrimage the end of September is something we are preparing to support and participate in as fully as possible. Geared for young people

between 18 - 35 years old, thousands of young people, from all over the world are expected to arrive in Cape Town and in fact on our doorstep in Rondebosch for the pilgrimage. Peter Oscroft has already offered his expertise to assist the Taize Brothers. We need to identify a core group who will meet with the Taize Brothers to assist with modelling the campaign and the coordination of the way forward for a successful Pilgrimage.

### **Expression of Thanks and Gratitude**

The 'Churchwardens Report' will talk to the viability of our church in terms of parish plant, upkeep and improvements among others. The 'Treasurers Report' will address our financial viability, especially our budgetary constraints in tough economic times when we need to do so much. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Churchwardens, Ian Paul, Hugh Nourse and Mark Solomon for their support and hard work, our Treasurer, Peter Coutts for ensuring that we run a tight ship, the Auditor, Graham Collins and the Parish Council for your investment of time and effort. I acknowledge with thanks and gratitude the work of our ministry teams I have not mentioned above: The Layministers, Lectors (readers), Prayer Ministers and Altar Servers. The Sacristans, Flower Arrangers, Tidying Hymn and Prayer Books after services, the Verger, Sidespersons, the Organist and Money Men. The Tea Duties team, Bible Study Groups, Prayer Groups, Sewing Club and St Thomas for Touch. The Ministry to the Elderly and Saturday Women's Group. Thanks to Barbra Lee for the care of our grounds and gardens with Tom Valema and Jerry Hlezupondo. Thanks also Agnus Banda and Jacqui Chisisili our domestic staff. Special thanks to Jenny Masterson and the Fikelela task team, those who assist with packing food parcels and Geoff Burton for the fundraising initiative.

Last but not least a huge debt of gratitude to Caroline Westwood for her tireless commitment to ensure the smooth running of the Parish Administration way beyond the call of duty. Thank you to Judy Paul ever ready to assist when called upon. A big thank you also to Margie Davidson for her willingness to continue working on a part-time basis to manage the accounts. Thank you all for coming to the Vestry meeting. God bless you.

**Ven Keith De Vos**

**Rector.**