

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father.*

Paul writes to the "holy people in Colossae" – which gives rise to all sorts of images in my mind. SO I wonder, would he write to "God's holy people" in Orchards? I have not been in the parish long enough to comment for others, but I usually doubt that he would address me like that. But the point he makes so often in his letters is that we are "holy" not because we act that way, we (certainly I) usually don't. We are considered holy because of what God has done in Christ: Jesus has taken our 'unholiness' and given us his holiness. We are holy because God has declared us to be holy!

Now that we are holy, the challenge we face is to shape our lives and live day by day in a way which reflects this reality. Choice by choice, and being forgiven and encouraged and filled with God's Holy Spirit, we become more and more like Jesus.

Generosity

God is love. Paul tells us that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). What more could he give? Jesus, who is part of the Godhead, has given us himself. Given completely. There is nothing more to give! And nothing more is needed.

God's love is seen in his generosity to us. Our love will surely be seen in through our generosity.

And the people of St Luke's have been, and continue to be, generous. Very generous.

As we have followed the parish finances the Council have noted how the Dedicated Giving of our members has continued with only a slight drop. And this at a time when many other churches are struggling. There has been a dip in income, and a number of people have contacted the office and explained how as their income has dropped, they will have to decrease their giving. This is not only understandable, but in line with Paul's teaching as well. He tells the Corinthians that our gift is accepted "according to what one has, not according to what one does not have"(1 Corinthians 8:12).

In addition to the regular giving, there has also been generous giving to the Parish "Covid Fund". This has enabled us to keep reaching out to those in need.

A number of people who have not been able to give financially have given in other ways. And we have numerous people serving in various ways: helping with worship, maintaining gardens, knitting, making sandwiches, helping maintain the church facilities.

Your faithfulness is very much appreciated. We are able to continue to minister and spread the Good News and reach out to the world because we have the resources.

A Generous Congregation

The resources we have received are being used to make a difference. As God has been generous, and our members have been generous, we – the 'church' – have been able to be generous too.

The details are very encouraging.

Income

The donations to the Covid Fund have been growing. The receipts (rounded off) are:

April – 19 000

May - 22 000

June – 29 000

July – 36 000

We have received R 106 500 in the Covid Fund. This has been very encouraging

And this has been added to from the other money the parish receives. We ensure that we give away at least 10% of the parish income.

So, where has it gone?

Expenditure

Bishop R 40 000

The Parish gave Bishop Steve this amount for his discretionary fund, which has been received with deep thanks since the needs in the diocese grow day by day.

Masks R 8 000

We have subsidised some women who have been sewing masks which we have given away to people coming to the Feeding Scheme; especially valuable as masks have become mandatory.

Personal Protective Equipment R 9 000

We have provided protection to those helping at the Feeding Scheme – big screens to cover doorways, gloves for workers and sanitiser to clean the hands of all that come for food.

Beanies R 1 000

We have bought wool, and then members have knitted beanies which we have given away in the bitter mid-winter to people at the Feeding Scheme.

Feeding -Tuesdays R 13 250

We give the hungry and homeless a peanut butter sandwich, a boiled egg, and some e'Pap. Often feeding over 150 people.

Feeding – Thursdays R 20 500

We are able to give people a cup of soup, some bread, ePap and oranges. Numbers have grown from about 70 in April to almost 200 in August. There have also been a growing number of children coming with their mothers on days when they are not in school.

e'Pap R 5 200

We buy ePap, which is a balanced and nutritious food – especially made to give those with HIV and taking ARV's the necessary nourishment to keep them healthy. *(edit: St. Luke's has paid R 5200, but in actual Rands and cents it has cost approximately R 50 000 which was covered via a generous private donation)*

Food Hampers R 20 900

We buy a variety of ingredients – such as beans and pap, sugar and soya mince, together with some fresh vegetables – which we pack into a hamper (at about R 175 each) and give to families in need which will help keep them fed. The packs go to families that are part of the parish or are known to our members. We give packs out weekly, and the need we are aware of far outstrips our ability to provide this help.



Vouchers R 2 400

We have purchased a number of vouchers (for R 220) redeemable at Pick 'n Pay, which can be given as an emergency measure to people when the need is great and we have no other resources.

Press On Wages R 11 200

The Press On Ironing service had to close during lockdown, which left the people working there, and their families, with no income. So we have supported them with a portion of their wages until the service is once again running viably. This will probably end in the next while as their work picks up – so please support them by getting your ironing done there – and encourage others to use the service.

Wage Assistance R 19 000

A number of parishioners have lost their jobs and been left desperate. We have “employed” them to help with arranging the feeding, doing the shopping for the Food Hampers and packing them. All express their deep and profound thanks for this support.

Nurture a Nurse R 7 600

We have taken small gifts, as tokens of thanks and appreciation, to the nurses and care workers in the Retirement Homes in the parish – Pioneer House two weeks ago, and to Randjes Estate this week (a full report will be given next week). These are people on the front-line who expose themselves to possible infection by caring for others. This too has been more than ‘well received’.



Other Support R 60 000

We have had a variety of pleas of help for various needs that have made a difference in the lives of various people. This has included help with medical expenses, with school fees, replacing a geyser and similar acts of compassion and generous mercy.

In addition to what the parish is spending on this ministry, there are also the ongoing help from people – a number making soup and helping with “Citchin Cookup”, people buying oranges that we can give to the feeding scheme each week and the very generous ongoing supply of e’Pap.

The total we have spent on this ministry is R 178 337.

A big thanks to Val Kuisis who has kept track of the finances and heads up the Covid Response Team – together with John Hoffe, Jenny Marcus, Sarah Myerscough, Rob Duncan and Jason Penrose. They have looked at the needs, debated the options and steered the response.

This is only possible because of the generosity of the people of God in this place. Thank you for your love, faithfulness and generosity – this is a clear indication of your love for the God of love. Being part of the people of God in this place is a privilege and a blessing.

Blessings!

Ian