

A christian icon that requires major restoration, creating an opportunity for expansion to meet the needs of a returning community.



The Little Church is falling down

And a community is rebuilding. Good Shepherd - Protea on the slopes of Table Mountain near Kirstenbosch Gardens is falling down – and a major restoration project is under way to meet the needs of the returning Protea Village community. Construction is planned to start in February 2009.

The little Anglican church of Good Shepherd – Protea, a chapel of St Saviour's Claremont, has a long history of serving the local community since it was first built in Protea Village in 1864 after Bishop Robert Gray had purchased Protea Farm and renamed it "Bishop's Court".

The congregation of farm workers soon outgrew the little chapel and in 1886 a larger church was built 50 metres north of the original chapel, with the people of Protea providing mate-

rials and labour. After the forced removal of the Protea Village community to the Cape Flats during the worst years of South Africa's political history, the church was closed for 10 years. In recent times, however, it has developed a vibrant congregation, consisting not just of local residents, but also of families who were forcibly removed in the 1960's as a consequence of Group Areas legislation. Many families remained faithful and devoted members of the congregation throughout the turbulent times

and since re-opening for regular worship on Advent Sunday in 1978, local residents have also joined the church. What is exciting for the present congregation is that many of these evicted families have been granted land restitution and will be returning to the area where they will rebuild Protea Village. The consequence is that Good Shepherd needs not only to expand the size of the church building, but also to preserve the structure. The roof beams must be replaced and capacity needs



enlarging to meet community requirements during the week, not just for church services.

How will these costs be met? Approximately R3 million is needed to fund this redevelopment, much of this funding being raised from the congregation, charitable trusts and benefactors. An indication of the immensity of the fund-raising task is that a regular Sunday morning congregation numbers around 90 people

BELOW: Sunday school, under the leadership of Esmé Reynolds, has an enthusiastic attendance.



from 60 families – with a total of about 120 families closely associated with the church. As a result of the commitment and dedication of these families, we have currently raised just over R1.5m. This will enable us to commence the restoration programme early in 2009, but in excess of a further R1m is still required to ensure that we can successfully complete the project.

“By providing funding,



ABOVE: The architect's impression of how the stone church will look once completed. Note the enclosed entrance and the rear, expanded facilities.

trusts and individuals are contributing to the tangible growth of this church as a community centre that embraces local residents, the present congregation and the returning Protea villagers," according to Andrew Wilson, the HR consultant who chairs the fund-raising team and who is also one of the Good Shepherd lay ministers.

"Good Shepherd," Andrew adds "is part of

South Africa's history and sets a wonderful example for other communities who face similar challenges. We are equally excited about the redevelopment of the village itself and the return of the Protea people, a process that has been driven by the Protea Village Action Committee and donors will have an opportunity to extend their involvement to the redevelopment of the village itself."



ABOVE: "Auntie Frances" van Gussling on her 98th birthday in 2007: Four generations of the "Protea Village" family, photographed with Bishop Christopher Gregorowski.

BELOW: Widening the church will increase seating capacity to 150 and will centre the nave on the altar and the stained glass window, donated by Bishop West-Jones in 1898



The Cross of Nails

Jenny Wilson, one of the original members of the Protea Village Action Committee, the driving force behind the restitution of Protea Village, has had her efforts recognised by her being admitted as a Companion to the Order of the Community of the Cross of Nails. She tells the story of the return of the Protea villagers.

Any history about the Cross of Nails has to begin on the 14 November 1940, when Coventry Cathedral in England was bombed during the Second World War. As the Provost walked through the smouldering ruins, he said, "We are a faith of forgiveness" and inscribed "Father forgive" on the wall behind the shattered sanctuary. Three medieval nails that had fallen from the rafters were bound together to form a cross of nails which became a powerful symbol of reconciliation. Soon after the war, the youth from Coventry went to Dresden in Germany to assist in rebuilding the Deaconess's House and youth from Germany went to Coventry to help remove the rubble from the devastated cathedral as a gesture of reconciliation. Thus began the Cross of Nails international ministry of reconciliation.

Now, we fast forward to 1989 when the Revd John Goliath became rector of St Saviour's in Claremont and started addressing the process of reconciliation in the South African context. Later we were blessed with a visit from Canon Paul Oestreicher from the cathedral who told us the Coventry story and brought us the message of forgiveness, healing and peace.

At one particular service, Fr John Goliath addressed the issue of racism and made a moving confession that was a life changing experience

for many. Several workshops were held in search of better understanding and a Cross of Nails prayer group was initiated, which has met regularly since 1991.

Being a member of Good Shepherd-Protea since 1980, I had heard many stories from the Protea people of life during the apartheid years and about their brutal eviction from their beloved Protea. Thus started a relationship of mutual understanding, as brothers and sisters in Christ, between the original coloured congregation and the newer white members. Since 1994, we have actively pursued the Protea Lands' claim and in 2006 the land was finally signed over to the claimants, publically marked by a special thanksgiving service held at Good Shepherd and attended by many families, friends and dignitaries including the premier of the Western Cape, Mr Ebrahim Rasool.

It was the small steps in the process of reconciliation, coupled with the Protea lands claim story, that attracted the attention of Karl and Lynne Griffiths-Fulton who visited the parish from Coventry in 1999. This inspired them to invite us to tell the Protea story which was seen as a story of hope arising from the "new" South Africa at the first Cross of Nails conference in Coventry in August, 2000. It was then that Canon Andrew White invited the parish of St Saviour's and its chapelry, Good Shepherd-Protea, to become a member of the International Community of the Cross of Nails. This was graciously accepted by the then rector, Bishop Garth Counsell, and the church council. What an honour and privilege to be part of this amazing network of over one hundred and fifty centres worldwide.



ABOVE: Jenny Wilson (right) with (left to right) Cecil McLean, Eileen Nomdo and Stella McLean, all of whom have attended Cross of Nails conferences in Coventry, England



BELOW: A warm welcome awaits congregants at Good Shepherd, a community that attracts Christians from all over the Cape Peninsula and further afield.



Important Dates

- 1848 Arrival of Bishop Robert Gray: Purchases Farm Protea (1851) and renames it Bishops court. Develops the estate and homestead. Establishes school and converts those living on the farm, holding prayer services and exercising pastoral care.
- 1864 With the help of the Bishop, the people of Protea village build their own chapel, opened by Bishop Gray on 8 December, 1864.
- 1865 On 29 June, Bishop Gray dedicates the first Protea chapel to The Good Shepherd. Services were conducted on alternate Sundays in English and Dutch.
- 1874 Arrival of Bishop William West Jones; development of Protea village and housing with help of the Colonial Bishopric Fund.
- 1881 On 25 July, vestry meeting decides to build a larger church 50 metres north of the original chapel. People from Protea collect materials and provide labour.
- 1886 The new building opens with solemn Eucharist on 29 June, 1886 – Whitsunday.
- 1903 Enlargement of Chapel is undertaken: nave widened on north side by 2 metres.
- 1913 Three stone cottages built opposite the church by Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens for members of the Protea community who were employed by them when they established the Gardens.
- 1957 Passing of Group Areas Act.
- 1964 Forced removal of Community from Protea.
- 1968 Removals completed; church closed, stone cottages boarded up, dwellings demolished.
- 1969 Last Kirstenbosch workers out in June.
- 1978 Advent Sunday and regular services are resumed. The Protea Community attend when they can arrange transport.
- 1981 The roof structure of tiles is repaired and ceiling inserted. The congregation is constituted as a chapelry with two chapel wardens and a council. The first vestry meeting is held 2 August; 65 families on the roll and 41 children in the Sunday School.
- 1986 Church celebrates its Centenary of the building. Archbishop Philip Russell celebrates and preaches. Bishop Freddie Amooore and the Rector of St Saviours, the Rev Ron Taylor, lead the service. Many of the original Protea Community return for this Celebration.
- 1987 Archbishop Desmond Tutu takes up residence in Bishops court and worships occasionally at Good Shepherd.
- 1990 Much needed vestry, kitchen and toilet facilities are added. Dedicated to the memory of the late Mrs Rosie Nomdo and the late Mrs Florrie Carelse. The porch is also added.
- 1995 The first official re-union of the Protea Village community is held with a service in the church.
- 2000 Good Shepherd parishioners tell their story of forced removals at Coventry Cathedral, UK. Good Shepherd becomes part of the International Community of the Cross of Nails ministry for reconciliation, healing and peace.
- 2002 Forty six Protea Village families receive financial compensation for their forced removal; 86 families await the finalisation of restitution of the land.
- 2004 24 April, Good Shepherd presented with their own Cross of Nails as a constant reminder of our responsibility for reconciliation.
- 2006 24 September, 2006, 86 claimant families attend a thanksgiving service and ceremony to mark the signing over of the Protea land.

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Name: The Church of the Good Shepherd, Protea.
Bank: Standard Bank, Claremont (Branch Code: 02 51 09)
Account Number: 072 554 509 • Reference: GSPBF (Name optional)
International Swift Transfer: SBZAJJ