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**February 2012**

Dear Prayer Partners,

We rejoice with the Wood and Alberts families who welcomed grandchildren into their lives in January. Barry and Molly's eldest son, Julian and his wife Maria had twin girls on the 19<sup>th</sup> – Zara Ella and Chloe Lucie - born in London. Barry and Molly will be off to London soon to see their grand daughters and help out wherever possible!

Deon and Hendrika's son Dean and his partner had a baby girl – Lekeycia Bruintjies - on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

We pray for both families that these little girls will bring them much joy and love and that God will hold them in the palm of His loving hand throughout their lives. We remind you to please pray for Anna and Gustav who are starting IVF treatment this year.

Volmoed and the community and visitors have been blessed with a new arrival too. It is the most beautiful peacock who has decided that this place set aside by God is just the right place to be and he wanders around and visits each house and of course, gets spoilt with titbits, which makes staying at Volmoed even more attractive! When one studies him closely and sees the variety of his colourful feathers, one just cannot help but praise our Creator and marvel at His creation. At night our guests have seen him jump/fly up into the pine trees where he is safe from predators thank goodness.



I think we can all agree that we “melted” through some very hot days in January – the barometer outside the office went up to 35 degrees on a number of occasions. Sadly all the vegetation and gardens dried up and looked brown – I even noticed burnt leaves on many of the trees so they too suffered from the heat. Our neighbours were busy with spraying the vineyards for all the bugs. But, thankfully we did get a little rain one day and as Serghay says “the garden smiles!” The hydrangeas have been beautiful with lots of colourful blooms and so have the agapanthus blooms.

We were fortunate to be busy on Volmoed over the festive season with many old friends coming to stay again. After the holiday-makers went home we were blessed with the students from Whitworth College USA who have been coming to Volmoed for many years. After they left students from Taylor University USA arrived and then later on in the month we had a group of German students. It seems that Volmoed is “the place” to end their stay in South Africa and where they can quietly correlate all that they have learnt and seen before flying home. At the end of January we welcomed back the theology students from Stellenbosch University and it is always a blessing to see them absorb the

peace and joy of Volmoed. We also had Pastors coming for a quiet retreat to prepare themselves for the busy year ahead and a small group came from St. Margaret's Fish Hoek for a silent retreat. Please give thanks with us for the blessings of bookings for January.

Isobel De Gruchy has had some good news: her book of poems and meditations based on the writings of Julian of Norwich has been accepted for publication by SCM Canterbury. Too few Christians are aware of our rich heritage of the mystic tradition which deepens our spirituality. Commenting on Julian the present Archbishop of Canterbury says "Julian's book may well be the most important work for Christian reflection in the English language." So who is this person?

We know very little about the life of the woman who wrote about her "Shewings of Divine Love", not even her real name. It has long been thought that she takes her name from the Church of St Julian in Norwich, where she lived in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century.

We do know from her writings that when she was thirty she suffered from an illness that almost resulted in her death. During the time that she herself thought she was dying, she received the series of sixteen "shewings", (showings) or "revelations" from God.

She did recover and became a solitary or " anchoress" who lived in a cell for the rest of her life, attached to the church of St Julian in Norwich. She wrote down her visions in a short version, presumably not too long after they occurred. And for the next twenty years she meditated on what "our good Lord" and Jesus, her saviour, had revealed to her.

With an insight deepened by a thorough knowledge of Scripture as well as the writings of other Christian mystics, she spelled out how she had wrestled with the questions that her visions evoked in her in a longer version of her "showings". This is the first book known to be written by a woman in English, and is now acknowledged all over the world as one of the great classics of spiritual literature. Thomas Merton wrote that "Julian is without doubt one of the most wonderful of all Christian voices.....I think that she is with Newman the greatest English theologian

But these writings remained largely unknown until they were translated from the middle English in which Julian wrote and have become alive to many Christians from the second half of last century till today. We encounter a woman who seems to be a contemporary of ours, very no-nonsense and down-to-earth, but with a profound depth of understanding of the human condition and full of Christian hope in our will to do good. She has come to a deep understanding of God and easily talks about something that we often shy away from, the Holy Trinity. What she says is not always easy to grasp, but is so compelling that one perseveres. Underneath all the showings, and shining through from beginning to end, is the message, "the meaning of all is love".

Isobel will be sharing her poems and mediations (which are the result of some 20 years of interest in Julian) with a small group on Volmoed, for six weeks during February and March.

#### **VOLMOED FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS:**

3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	Christian Family Church with Bill & Hermien Carney
6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup>	Helderberg NGK missionaries with Louise Theron
10 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	St. George the Martyr, Kuils River
17 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup>	Gerber wedding
24 <sup>th</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup>	Group of Zimbabweans, with Stanley Mugada, to fast & pray for their country

Please continue to pray for all the guests coming to Volmoed that they will continue to discover the depths of God's love and healing for their lives. Pray for all who live and work here that we will continue to be witnesses to God's love and continue to be instruments of His healing.

Please pray too for wisdom in marketing this Special Place – we do need to increase the turnover but we do not want to abuse or bruise the Spirit of God that dwells here so richly.

*God bless and lots of love, Jane*