



IN TOUCH FIRST QUARTER – MARCH 2026

Minister's Musings

Greetings to you all,

It is hard to think we have been at St Francis United for three months – how the time is flying by! We have been so abundantly blessed in the few months we have been here – it has literally been like moving from home to home. We have felt the warmth of you all in our spiritual family here and our 'meet & greet' gatherings on Friday evenings helped us to get to know many of you better. Getting to know everyone's names may take a little longer! We are looking forward with much anticipation to what God wants to do in and through His church here. I do pray that you will use the special events planned over Holy week and Easter to invite outsiders to the church. I sense that many are still seeking to apply the lessons from our recent series on 'Transitions' in their personal lives as well as in the church. May our prayer together be that we will move beyond the 'nowhere between two somewheres'.

As Holy Week and the celebration of Christ's passion are almost upon us, I thought it would be fitting to share some thoughts with you as we prepare for what is by far the most sobering yet meaningful event of our Christian Calendar.

At this time of year we begin to think more carefully about what it cost God to provide us with His Gift of salvation. As we do, can we ever really comprehend the dimensions of Christ's anguish, rejection, betrayal and torment in the closing days of His life? We live in a world that provides everything to enhance our comfort and ease of living and shies away from anything that would cause discomfort or harm. Air-conditioned offices, air-conditioned cars, electronic banking, electronic

mail, microwaves, instant takeaways, relaxing recliners, the list is endless. In some countries, even capital punishment is made comfortable by using lethal injection! How then can we identify with One who would choose rejection, choose suffering, choose pain, choose that path that would lead to His terrible crucifixion? How can we, in such a modern age, comprehend the agony of the cross as being the inevitable outcome of the conflict between heaven and hell, good and evil?

How can we come to terms with the fact that for Jesus this conflict was so real that He begged the Father to 'take the cup of suffering' from Him? How can we understand the heart of a Father who has the power to prevent, yet seemingly does nothing to avert, the excruciating death of His Son?

I think the Passion again reminds us that Jesus never promised those who followed Him a life free from trial, pain and suffering. Perhaps it is because we do not fully understand the Passion of Jesus that we so often fall prey to bitterness, blame, resentment, rebellion, withdrawal, alienation and unforgiveness. By doing so, is there any wonder that we so often do not overcome or conquer? The Passion of Jesus reminds us that God is always in control, that He 'is able to do immeasurably more than what we ask or imagine' (Eph 3:20) – He is able to intervene in whatever crisis or ordeal we may be facing right now. When we walk along that Calvary Road with Jesus, we encounter a pattern of response - a pattern I believe Jesus wants us to follow :-

- complete *honesty* before God as we admit that what we are going through seems more than we can bear and that we wish to be relieved of it (Matt 26:37-39)

- a *yieldedness* that admits that God's way – regardless of what pain it brings – is the *best* for us and that we are prepared to endure it for Him (Matt 26:42)
- a loving *commitment* to the interests of *others* above ourselves, even if it means suffering and sacrifice (Phil 2:5-8)
- a decision to *persevere*, with confidence that *in the end*, God's justice and care *will* prevail (1 Pet 2:21-24)
- a wholehearted *submission* to what God wants to accomplish in our lives through trials and tribulations (James 1:2-5)
- an uncompromising *resolve* to *obey* Christ no matter what the cost (1 Pet 1:21,22 ; Jn 11:16)
- a steadfast *belief* that God's grace is sufficient in every moment of our lives (2 Cor 12:9)

It is perhaps stranger that we should expect comfort and ease as opposed to trial and suffering in a world that is so full of sin and corruption. Yet, when trials come our way, we have a wonderful opportunity to show the world what Christ showed the onlookers of the cross that day – that the light had come and darkness could not put it out.

Perhaps right now you are passing through your own Gethsemane. Don't despair, look ahead, already the bright rays of Resurrection will begin to penetrate the darkness.

"He came that we might have life, life in abundance", the apostle John reminds us. It is the result of such life, through faith, courage and endurance we can overcome all things through Christ in us! Let us, therefore, run with perseverance the race set before us (Heb 12:1-2) and fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Can I invite you to join us for every night of our Holy Week services that begin on Monday as we seek to experience – in some small way – the suffering and anguish of our Saviour in His journey to the cross. After all, it is for this reason alone that we even gather together as His church. I believe that this week will impact our lives in ways we never imagined possible.

Bless you all

Rev Graeme



HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Words of the Cross

Please join us each day of Holy Week as we reflect on the final words of our Lord Jesus as He hung on the cross.

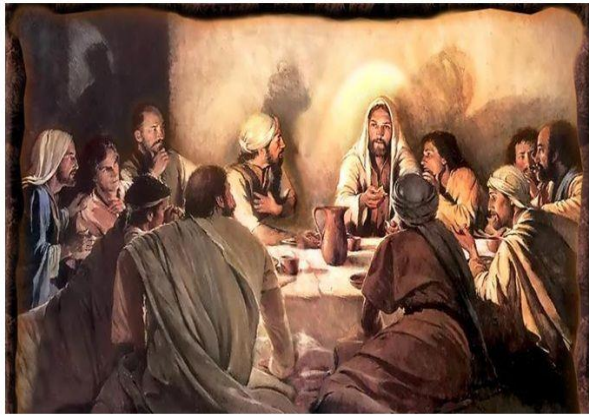
Our prayer is that through these Services we will be able to share, in some small measure, The Passion of our Lord

Mon 30th March: 6.30pm : A *Word of Pardon*
Tues 31st March: 6.30pm : A *Word of Promise*
Wed 1st April : 6.30pm : A *Word of Passion*
Thurs 2nd April : 6.30pm : A *Word of Pleading*
Good Friday : 9am : A *Word of Proclamation*
Remembrance Saturday : 9am – 12pm
Resurrection Sunday : 9am : A *Word of Power*

IN MEMORIAM

We express our sincere condolences to the families of the late Winsome Campbell and Roderick Eaton. Winsome passed away peacefully on 3rd February 2026, and Roderick passed away on 5th March 2026, after a long illness.

May these dear ones rest in the peace they so richly deserve. May God comfort the bereaved families in knowing that their loved ones are safe in the arms of Jesus, after a life well lived, dedicated to His service.



In the Upper Room : John 13-17 Dan Vaughan

A while ago our Bible study group decided to embark on a study of the Last Supper. We chose the account in Chapters 13 to 17 of John's Gospel, anticipating it would be a final summary of Jesus' public teaching - the way God would have his people live.

There followed for us six remarkable weeks of study. We uncovered to our surprise a narrative far more intimate than we could ever have anticipated. We found, not a teacher to the crowds, but the words and actions of a man saying a sorrowful farewell to those he chose now to call *his* friends. Here was infinite compassion. Aware that he was causing those he loved much distress he revealed his deep love for them.

More than comfort, and more even than the assurance of his Spirit at Pentecost - when he would return as Comforter- here our Lord set the pattern of a true life in Christ: friendship with God, a home in heaven, peace beyond understanding, and a relationship that would bear much fruit. He spoke of an intimate abiding in him, a wonder of possibilities that would stir and enlarge their souls.

Above all there was love and servanthood. He washed their feet as an expression of his love for them, and he told them to do the same for one another. He commanded them to love, as he had so often proclaimed both in word and in example.

We would do well to join those apostles during this time of Lent. It may be that revisiting these chapters will help us to open ourselves in reflection and repentance as we prepare ourselves for the darkness of Good Friday and the wonder of Easter Sunday.

FEEDBACK FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2026

The Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 22nd March 2026 was well attended. The meeting was chaired by Pastor. Graeme Mercer.

The Annual Financial Statements for the period ending February 2026 were accepted and confirmed. The income for the year was 6.8% lower than the previous year and the expenses were 26.7% higher than the previous year. This was due to major repairs to the manse, inconsistent tithing, and the costs relating to the appointment of a new Minister.

The Budget for the 2026/2027 financial year was presented. Jan Duvenage advised that the figures showed a possible deficit of R145,457 based on the current ratio of income and expenditure. He recommended that church members are encouraged to tithe more consistently and additional fundraising should be done. The Budget was proposed by Jan Duvenage and seconded by Jill Seabra.

Jan Duvenage and Clayton Larsson have stepped down as Board members, but Jan will continue to perform the function of Treasurer, reporting to the Minister.

The following individuals have been nominated to serve on the Board of Elders for next three years:

Rev Graeme Mercer: Chairman/Minister
Ian Ahrens; Kobus Lombard; George Pavey
Andrew Pudney; Chippy Walker
Jill Seabra; Linda Oosthuizen
Gina Pieterse

Welcome to our new members:

We welcome the following new members to our St Francis Family:

Rev. Terrence Arthur Fisher
Mrs. Rhonwyn Wilmot-Fisher
Mrs. Moray Swanepoel
Douglas and Jenny du Preez
Mitri and Petrus Delpot
Petrus and Lindsay Swanepoel
Gerdus and Beverly Bouwer
Corinne du Plessis
Malcolm and Kim Goldhill.
Debbie Van Der Bilt

We pray that God will richly bless them all as they find their place of service within the body of Christ here.

CONGRATULATIONS ANDRE VICTOR

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE AN OLD MAN ON A BICYCLE



We congratulate Andre Victor on achieving 2nd place in the 42 km Cape Argus Cycle Race 2026.

"When I am 70" he said, "I am going to do the 42 km Cape Argus race, because I can!" he said.

So, after 8 months of intensive training, we packed our bags, put Andre's Raleigh SP 7000 on the bike rack and headed onto the N2 for Cape Town.

On Sunday, 8th March, Andre rode to the starting point, and I walked down the Seapoint Promenade to the Stadium, with a rucksack on my back. I stood at the finish line, monitoring him on my Sport splits app. The race started at 10:03, and he reached Tokai (21 km) in 54 minutes. Then there was a long silence as the climb up Edinburgh drive intensified. I held my breath as the minutes ticked by. His pace slacked off. Where was he? Had something happened? Then a message from my sister: "Pam, he is on course!" I breathed a sigh of relief. At last, he made it to the finish in 1 hour 49 minutes!

He rode a good race, kept the faith, and made us all proud.

Congratulations Andre!

THE JOY GROUP IS GETTING A FACE LIFT!

After attending the Joy Group's Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 24th March 2026, I could not help thinking. **What would Sophia Loren say about the Joy Group's new facelift? Well, I researched a recent issue of Hello Magazine and found this quote:**



The ladies of our Joy Group are beautiful, but perhaps under the leadership of our new Chairlady, Mrs. Kathy Mercer and the newly elected Committee. they can sparkle with new ideas, a new vision and mission – and a passion for reaching the women in our Sedgefield Community for Jesus.

The meeting was officiated by Rev. Graeme Mercer who shared a short message on forgetting the past and moving into the future. He expressed appreciation to the Committee members who were stepping down, namely Theresa Jordaan, Linda Blaser and Linda Larsen.

A new Committee was then elected, namely :

Mrs Kathy Mercer: Chairlady; Jill Seabra, Deputy Chairlady; Judith Nay, Karin Freitas, Margaret Waterson and Linda Oosthuizen.

The meeting concluded with a moment of special blessing as all the ladies shared in Holy Communion served by Rev Graeme Mercer.



**GREETINGS FROM SYLVIA RUNDLE:
JACKSONVILLE USA – submitted by Gina
Pieterse**

In August 2025, I emigrated to live with my daughter, Trudy, and husband, Steve, in the rural town of McClenny, approximately 45 minutes' drive from Jacksonville, in the State of Florida.

I live with her family on an 8-hectare premises with lots of trees, chickens and Guinea fowl. I visit friends in Jacksonville often and alternate between attending church services in Jacksonville and with my family in McClenny. I am included in family events and am now the grandmother of a fifth-generation baby, born in November 2025. I will soon be going to Charlton, North Carolina, to visit family. I include a few photos of my family in the USA, to share with all my SFUC and JOY group friends.

Stay blessed
Sylvia Rundle
March 2026



A PRAYING COMMUNITY



WE ARE PRAYING FOR YOU

Each Friday Morning, at 8.30 a.m., we come together in the chapel to bring a symphony of prayer to the Lord. We pray for the Church and its ministries, for members of our congregation who are sick or have suffered a bereavement, for Sunday services and any special events, like Holy Week and Easter Services, for our Minister and his wife Kathy as they lead us forward into the future, for our newly elected Leadership team. We pray for our broken world, for our Government and country. It is also a time to bring thanksgiving to God and simply exalt His holy name! There is nothing like coming together in the presence of God to pray with fellow believers.

Please join us for just 30 minutes each Friday, commencing promptly at 8h30. If you have a specific prayer request, you would like us to pray for please contact Pamela Victor on 0724044902. All requests will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Why we need to pray...

- **To Change Ourselves:** "Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays." — Soren Kierkegaard
- **For Union with God:** "The whole reason why we pray is to be united into the vision and contemplation of God to whom we pray." — Julian of Norwich
- **To Recognize Dependence:** "Prayerlessness is our declaration of independence from God." — Daniel Henderson
- **As Spiritual Breath:** "Being a Christian without prayer is as impossible as being alive without breathing." — Unknown
- **For Partnership:** "Prayer is our partnership with God in transforming history." — John Piper

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Ian McEwan's journey to the Source of the Nile In Uganda

From the early age of two years, I was carted around southern Africa by my parents. When I was ten years old, I was taken on safari as far north as Nairobi in Kenya visiting, amongst other places, the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Crater National Park. I would later visit many wildlife areas, from as far north as the Ruaha National Park in southern Tanzania to Cape point in SA in the south. Then, as a Tour Guide in the late 1980's, I led many safaris to Botswana. I now realize what a privilege it was and how the Lord blessed me by seeing so much of His wonderful creation with so many outstanding sightings of wildlife.

Since my youth, I have dreamed of visiting the Source of the Nile and the Murchison Falls in Uganda, because my father had visited this area. However, I could never afford such a trip.

"The Lord works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform". I could not have imagined that my dream would become a reality. My son messaged me to say he wanted a co-driver to drive a vehicle to Uganda via Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya. (He does forest-related consulting work). We set off from George on 1 February 2026, but had to be in southern Tanzania by 5 February 2026, which worked out to roughly driving 1000ks per day. We had to spend some very long days on the road, from 10 hours to 15 hours per day. Most of Zambia's imports, especially fuel, are brought in by big trucks from the port of Dar-es-Salaam in

Tanzania, resulting in indescribable big truck traffic. The border of Zambia & Tanzania at Tanduma is a nightmare and it took us three hours to clear customs. Yet the worst was still to come. It took us two hours to do the first 50 km, because of the big trucks, bikes and three wheeled Tuk-Tuks



What an unbelievable sight – this man is transporting a fridge on the back of his bike!

We had a very good drive through Tanzania with some spectacular scenery and managed to spend the night in Ruaha National Park, with some very good game viewing and birding.



Grey Crowned Cranes and Spoonbills in Ruaha National Park.



Mount Kilimanjaro Kenya

We entered Kenya via Tarakea near Kilimanjaro and visited Amboseli National Park, where we saw elephants and various wildlife. In Nairobi, we stayed in a modern high-rise apartment owned by the CEO of a large Chain Saw Company. The flat overlooked the Nairobi National Park, and from our 12th floor balcony, we saw elephant, giraffe, rhino and Hartebees. We spent the day in the Nairobi National Park, which covers an area of 12 000 hectares.

The reserve demonstrated considerable commitment to wildlife protection by constructing a viaduct bridge spanning more than one kilometre along the railway line that traverses the park, effectively minimising the risk of animal collisions.



Viaduct: Nairobi National Park

We left our Land Cruiser in Nairobi due to lack of suitable vehicle insurance in Uganda, and flew to Entebbe, Uganda. Although Uganda is small—about five Uganda's could fit into South Africa—it has a population of 47 million. Even seemingly remote areas were thronging with people, highlighting overpopulation as a leading contributor to disease and starvation in Africa.

Finally, we reached the source of the amazing, mighty Nile River, as it leaves Lake Victoria at Jinja on its 6800km journey to Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. The lake/Nile was very full and spoilt the effect of the water flowing over the rapids at the source. There were some beautiful birds in this area, and it was so wonderful to see the African Grey Parrot flying around freely in its natural habitat



We then made our way to the Murchison Falls National Park to book a boat trip which took us game viewing and bird watching up the Nile to the falls. We saw Hippo, Elephant and various other animals on the way. Unfortunately, with the high-water levels, the boats were not permitted to get too close to the falls because of the danger of the turbulent water. Despite this, witnessing the source of the Nile, the natural beauty, and Murchison Falls was spectacular.

We then returned to Entebbe airport, Uganda, and flew to Nairobi to fetch the Land Cruiser for the next phase of the journey – to leave the vehicle in Iringa Tanzania. We passed some awe-inspiring countryside and saw an ancient Baobab tree left standing in the middle of a field that had been cleared to plant crops.



We flew back to South Africa from Dar-es-Salaam after 25 unforgettable days.

Mission accomplished!