



Greetings from 5, Oluvimu Road in South 'C' Nairobi - the home of the TST.

It's May the first, a month since the end of the Chapter and almost two months since our last newsletter. So much has happened! We continue to settle into our base here in South 'C'. We are getting used to the Nairobi traffic, we know the names of a few neighbours, and where to find meat, vegetables and other household necessities. We are learning to live with the ongoing threat of violence from Al Shabaab – all are searched on entering Church each Sunday—and we have met a number of religious from the parish. But looking back on the past two months it is the Congregation Chapter that remains close to our hearts.

We thought it a good idea if each of us gave a short summary of a Chapter highlight so as to give you a flavour of our experience.

## OUR CHAPTER EXPERIENCE

*DONAL KIRK*



It was my first experience of a Congregation Chapter. It was long, hard work, demanding, but also a wonderful experience of brotherhood. The piece that stays with me is the struggle around finding a direction for the future and then seeking the right words to articulate it. The Spirit was truly moving in our midst. Perhaps, this poem 'Comes the Time' from Noel Davis summarises the process for me:

## TST BULLETIN



*'There comes the time for each of us  
to break out of who we have  
become our life a chrysalis, inside  
now cramped for meaning and  
restless for the more.*

*Dare we let go the known or cling  
on for dear life?*

*Comes the time we pass a point of  
no return with memories erupting  
from our core,*

*life straining to open wide its new  
wings in us.*

*Our struggle to resist a betrayal of  
that deafening inner cry to fly.....*

*Ahead.....A way untried,*

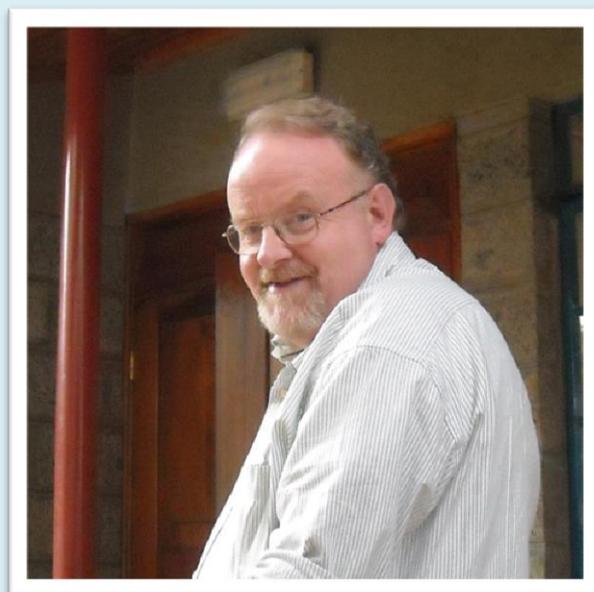
*known deep inside*

*with trust our only guide.'*

I was particularly delighted when the Chapter as the poem says 'decided to break out of who we have become' and took the risk of 'a way untried' with 'trust our only guide' and gave a resounding "Yes" to A Way into the Future as the direction for the whole Congregation for the next six years and beyond. A Way into the Future has now become Our Way into the Future.



## DECLAN POWER



A highlight for the Chapter for me was the election of the new CLT. The process that led to the election of these men was extraordinary. On the days before the election we were brought through a process of gathering information which would inform the quality of Brothers we now desired for leadership.

This gathering of information included us thinking through the qualities we felt the leader and team would need. This was followed by giving some thought to the model of leadership that we



# TST BULLETIN

felt would best suit the Congregation at this time. Then we heard from the outgoing CLT on their experiences over the past six years.

When finally we came to choosing the men we did so in a spirit of openness. In the days leading up to the election we shared the names we had chosen with each other in groups of five or six and later in groups of nine. This process proved invaluable on the actual day of election as each of us knew with whom the group was leaning. On the day of election and all within one hour we elected our new CLT.

Hugh was elected as CL and it felt right and it was a very emotional moment. For me the emotion was two ways. Now at last we were saying goodbye to Philip, Jack, Peter, Francis and David. These men have served the Congregation so well and so faithfully. They were courageous men who have given the Congregation a new focus and please God in time a new spirit.

Now another was being call forth from among us as our Leader. A man who came to the Chapter as the outgoing leader of the North American Province and was probably looking forward to a different type of ministry. He answered the call to this position with graciousness and humility. Many in the hall were moved by the emotion of the moment and shed a tear of joy and expectancy. Likewise when the others were elected, I certainly felt that we were embarking on a new phase of our journey with a new roadmap and a new team leading us. I heard anew the words of Isaiah "I am doing a new thing, can you not perceive it?"



**SUNIL BRITTO**

*And the day came when  
the risk to remain tight  
in a bud was more painful  
than the risk it took to blossom.*

The Nairobi Chapter, for me, was a string of burning bush experiences which mirrored to me,

## TST BULLETIN



my own call and the fears to live it authentically. I would like to outline three such burning bush moments that found a home in my heart.

The first one was during the first week, when the wider ERN members were still with us. A wider ERN member remarked that he was gathering from the small group sharings that some of the issues that are being raised now, have been issues that had been deliberated about extensively in most of the last few Chapters. He reminded us that, in the 'outside' world, this would not be tolerated. Then later in the day, a Chapter member - who later went on to be elected as Leader - raised a poignant question for us: The last few Chapters have quite clearly given us the future direction and yet we see that we have not moved significantly. Are we ever going to identify the resistances that are blocking or slowing us down? Now, that question got me into some serious soul searching.

The second burning bush



moment was the personal sharings by the members of the outgoing CLT. As they shared the experiences that gave them life and the ones they struggled with, it became clear to us all, that in the last six years they lived community and they cared deeply for each other. And that was the holy ground, out of which the dream that we now call Our Way into the Future emerged. Once again those words from our Constitutions began to echo in my ears: Community is the primary means of evangelisation. And I believe that, among the many significant elements of our future

# TST BULLETIN



direction, forming community deserves to be the first task.

The last burning bush moment for me, was from the Closing Ritual. During that ritual, the isalle plant was transplanted by the newly elected CLT from a pot into the ground. Now, this isalle plant is a sacred plant in East Africa and was in the centrepiece during the entire Chapter. The image which came rushing to my mind was that of a big plant in a pot whose roots are now constricted within the pot and needs transplanting in the fresh earth. That was such a fitting image for the transformation in ourselves that we felt called to at the Chapter. Are we all ready to risk such a transplanting and transformation?



**CHRIS MEEHL**

The immersion into Nairobi and being with people made poor, created a meaningful atmosphere for the Chapter. This experience enabled the Chapter to look at life realistically. In this reality there

was pain, struggle and a hope to acknowledge and accept it.

The CLT shared their experience of the past six years. In an open and trusting way they each spoke about how they have lived community, sharing their joys, hopes, sadness and challenges.

'A Way Into the Future' was



endorsed as 'Our Way Into the Future' and is for the whole Congregation. It is a call to choose life. It is a journey to find a new way of sharing our Brotherhood. All need to hear this call and live it according to their local circumstances.

The challenges of recent Chapters

# TST BULLETIN



were acknowledged but at this Chapter there was a radical call to embrace the mystery we call God, to live community intimately and fully and to be engaged with the people made poor.



**RUVAN REBELLO**



Nairobi charter 2014, was an exceptional time in engaging with brothers from different provinces and members of wider ERN. It was a call for a way of life, a new mindset and a totally new consciousness to make real what Jesus was passionate about. It was an experience of acknowledging

and celebrating our Presence as Brothers in this journey of the cosmos. Our gatherings together, especially when we sang party songs at the celebrations, brought to me our unique identity as Christian Brothers that created a total different environment of bonding. The chapter also had a significant liturgical impact that helped me to express my faith in freedom with the broad understanding and acceptance of Eucharistic celebrations and other rituals that drove us to our future directions. It had grace filled moments, when we were exploring and embracing our diversity within the wider interconnectedness of the planet. I was overwhelmed by the current reality of our congregation, when provinces presented their reports. That day, I felt the spirit speaking to us through our fragility and guiding us on to a path of letting go. It wasn't a question of survival, but a true call to live a transformed life as companions sharing lives on the journey. We



# TST BULLETIN

claimed to trust the spirit that was leading us into the process, yet at times our humanness weakened us as we wanted to be right and controlling. However, every brother present at the chapter will agree, that, Sr. Bridget Ehlert was an exceptional experienced facilitator who guided us patiently with respect through the whole chapter. 'Our Way into the Future' was fully endorsed as a new way forward into the journey of this congregation. We pray that the Spirit that has drawn us into this mystery, may also guide and strengthen us all as we explore and live this Mystery. Best Wishes.



The major part of our time over the past month has been spent on crafting our Strategic Plan for the next six years. This is demanding work but at the same time very rewarding. The conversations among us are very enriching as we try to imagine all the various facets of the task ahead and identify all that needs

to happen if this fragile plant, which is *Our Way into the Future*, is to be nurtured and grow into a mature tree. As a resource person in this planning process we hope to engage Br Alberto Parise, a member of the Comboni congregation, who is very skilled in the area of pastoral ministry and community engagement. We had a very stimulating conversation with him last week, he is very excited with what we are trying to do and would be available to us for most of the next twelve months.

We are also very conscious of our need to build community among ourselves. We see this as one of the three foundational elements of *Our Way into the Future*. Our search for help in this area led us to Sr Maggie McKenna MSOLA. We invited her for supper a week ago and agreed an outline for her future engagement with us. No doubt you are aware that we have lost John Casey to the CLT and that Francis Hall has been appointed in his place. We are delighted to welcome Francis on



# TST BULLETIN

to the TST and we look forward to living and working together. John, though now a member of the CLT will be working closely in partnership with us as we seek to implement this new direction for the congregation. Francis will join us in June after taking a break and a well-deserved rest.

The past month has not been totally taken up with planning and community building. We were happy to join the Nairobi cluster of the East Africa District for a day of reflection on the Chapter. We also managed to attend the official opening of twenty new classrooms, built by the Liam Mellon Foundation, for the Ruben



Centre. It was a wonderful experience to witness the joy of the children, all two thousands of them, as they clambered up the stairs of the three-storey building and marveled at the beauty of their bright, brand new classrooms. Liam Mellon, himself was there, to perform the opening formalities.

The months ahead will be busy with a variety of commitments. Some of us go to Province Chapters. There is also a Training for Transformation workshop in Lusaka which will be attended by the CLT and the new leadership teams of the Africa Province. While in Zambia we will engage with the leadership teams, the formation team at the novitiate, and visit the brothers' communities. We look forward to interesting conversations.

Wishing you all the blessings of Easter.

*The TST.  
Sunil, Donal, Declan,  
Chris and Ruvan.*