



COLLINS CONNECTION

November-December 2009



May the bright Son of Christmas shine in you.

Hello the Salesian Family

Yup! Your Trusty Takkies are still doing acrobatics; this time it's the money that has fast translated into loose change! We need more! Well...what have we done with it? Juggled, struggled and wrestled with dangerous impediments but won them all over! Take a peek!



**Our allegory for the Red Tape Struggle!
We won! What a push-over!**

We hope to keep winning with the other challenges.

We are very happy to report the great strides on the building front. I think the photos will speak for themselves so this edition will be more graphic than the usual written account. Enjoy the journey! We begin with the hall. The floor and stage have been built and we are now busy with the ring beam and support columns. These are necessary as hydraform brick will not support

the roof structure and we need to be safe! We need to thank Red Deporte in Spain and the Collins Trust for their contributions to this building. It will be used for indoor sports, gym, music and movement and many other cultural activities. We will invite you to our first concert!

Hauling up the hall! Don't fall off!

Our site works are not going up one building at a time. Because we may have to send the builder off site if funds run out and because it is a more economical way of doing the works, the foundations have been dug for a number of rooms at a time. The floors for these have then been laid and then the brick or wet-works have been done. The floors are mixed with a colour screed: green of course! This means that we do not have to go to the extra expense of tiling them or providing any other surfaces. This method also makes cleaning and maintenance very easy and



economical. The floors look attractive at the same time so we are pleased with the process. We therefore sometimes have views like these:

The floors of three rooms: the green is obscured by soil. However they do wash and treat them after the walls have gone up.



So what comes after the floors? The walls! And then the windows and then the doors and then we get to roof level. The roofing will not be constructed until January because the sheeting may grow legs and land up in the local shack housing estate. People are desperate so what would a little borrowing matter? Lots to us! Feast your eyes!

**Hall floor and stage:
Thank you Red Deporte and the Collins Trust!**



The happy team, so far away, on the stage are very proud of themselves. As you saw on the first page the hall has come a long way from here. It takes time and care to pour the concrete columns. There was a delay because the steel required took time to arrive and there were also engineering debates to resolve. So...be patient, we will get there one fine day.

Next we take you to a higher plane. Hold onto your hat!

You see...we haven't been loafing. In fact we feel on top of the world!

These are the classrooms for the Laura Vicuna centre. We have only constructed two of the Declan Collins rooms to the same height because the German Government are perhaps interested in funding all the workshops and they would want to finance these from scratch. We wait with baited breath for news from our Bonn office. They are submitting the proposal for us. Please hold your breath with us and make that a pertinent prayer? Much appreciated.



We have at last got at least some of the buildings to roof height. We are so pleased with us! Are you pleased too? We attend site meetings every two weeks where we hear from Glen our architect, Martin our Quantity Surveyor, and Ralph and Alf Fyfe who give us an up-date of the progress as they are the building contractors. Their company is not called Aura Projects

for nothing: They have a real aura of professionalism around them. What a relief that we do not have to fight with them. In fact we have formed very good relationships with all concerned and enjoy the process. Thank you!



Here is a view of the Declan Collins Cookery room and computer room.

The crafts room will be next and then we will wait until January to hear from the Bonn office regarding the workshops. Pray heard please...

We have submitted funding proposals and do follow leads from local contacts. However, responses take time and we need to keep building. How is the question! We have resorted to asking

God and Declan, those serious questions. Our prayer takkies are just as worn as our on-the-trot-ones!

So, what else has been happening besides the building? We are very pleased to tell you that Sr Giovanna, who is back from Italy, has taken over the craft project and is doing wonders. The group are currently being trained in sewing skills. Sr Giovanna is an expert! They are making all sorts of articles for their Christmas sale at the local parish. We wish them well...and lots of income.

Ekukhanyeni continue to do sterling work with the Permaculture Project and another group of fifteen trainees graduated last week. We congratulate them all and once again thank Ekukhanyeni for their support and partnership. Ryan Dickey has produced a very attractive and informative Permaculture Training Manual on urban permaculture. This is the first of its kind in South Africa. We are proud of you Liza and Ryan. We are hoping to raise funds for the permaculture project for Erf 4623 and proposals for this are in the pipeline. We dream of the day that our site looks well endowed with beautiful grounds and vegetable gardens in strategic places. Bernie is still on about establishing a snail and a mushroom farm...yes well...She insists that it is a good way of earning income. There are those Northern suburban restaurants that have Escargots on the menu. We hear from Liza and Ryan that the Deputy President and the Minister of Agriculture will visit St Francis in Lawley to learn more about urban permaculture and



**Permaculture Graduation Group!
Congratulations!**

food security using this way of cultivation. They will perhaps be interested in establishing such programmes in many areas. It is essential that our project education is integrated so that the whole person is taken care of and life situations can improve in a meaningful way. Education without food security is definitely not on our menu! This visit is planned for early 2010.

We were very touched by the Carmelite Community of Quidenham in England. They are long standing friends of Bernie and have been our prayer companions ever since the project began. However, we were very surprised to receive an email from them saying that they have, through a trust associated with them, sent us a donation for the project. From the bottom of our soles, we thank them! We will buy some readers for the children with the funds.

Our computer course is on course of course! We once again thank Val Drift for her consistent hard work and good results. The number of students has dropped this quarter. It usually does until January when students who have done their Matric need training skills. Fr Dougherty has been a great help in assisting the students with their English language skills Thank you!

Today is the 16th November and we remember with love and prayer Fr Declan Collins. It is the anniversary of his death. Ennerdale parish held a memorial service after Mass yesterday and so he is well remembered and is still very much part of our community and of the project. We once again extend our love and prayer to Mrs Monica Collins and family, and friends. We send them this Irish blessing: 'Saviour, may you give heavenly light to every poor soul that has left this world and to every poor soul we wish to prayer for. Dia duit, Collins family, Salesians and friends. Caroline Halpin, Declan's sister, has informed us that the annual Christmas cookery demonstration to raise funds for us is happening soon. We wish all concerned great success. We thank you and your trusty stalwarts for all your enthusiasm.



Well the year is almost at and end. Time flies and we are already planning for next year. Our newly constituted board members will be holding a workshop in early February to assess our needs and a way forward in view of the progress we have made.

It remains for us to wish each one of you a very happy Christmas. May every blessing, be yours. We thank all concerned with this project for their support and assistance. We hope to bring more good news next year. We once again thank all our donors for their financial support. Without you we would be a lost cause...and a cause lost!

Overheard from my window: A new Christmas Chirp:

We five birds so positive are.
That's why our beaks are so widely ajar
Over land and sea and mountain
Money will bloom in our bank...

Yes, well, we do have to have faith...

We assure you we are feeling decidedly in tune with providence! Take a festive break...until next year. May your New Year be a rich one!



Bernie Mullen

