

Friedenskirche



In the middle of the bustle of Hillbrow, the inner city high-rise residential neighborhood of Johannesburg stands the Friedenskirche –Church of Peace. In the concrete jungle of the most densely populated area of South Africa, this national monument and the areas of garden around it invite to quiet and peace- a green oasis of contrast to its surroundings. An estimated 120,000 people live within a few square kilometers in the flat buildings, the hotels and

on the streets. Now notorious for its crime and social problems, Hillbrow is and has always been a cosmopolitan centre, a magnet for people from around the world who come to Johannesburg, the city of Gold, and a hot-spot of social developments.

The Friedenskirche congregation was founded in 1888, shortly after the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, to minister to German-speaking Protestants, and give the German community a home in a foreign country. Particularly during and after the world wars, the congregation demonstrated its commitment to minister to the religious and social needs of this community and to be a visible sign of peace in Johannesburg. The present Church was built in 1912 in Romanic style, with some Cape Dutch features added. It is one of the oldest, best-preserved Church buildings still in use in Johannesburg, and was declared a national monument in Hillbrow beside the Old Fort. The funds to construct it came from the congregations, supporters in Germany, amongst whom the Prussian royal family figured notably, and the German-speaking Jewish community businessmen in Johannesburg. A trust to provide for maintenance needs has been established.

For many years the Friedenskirche was at the centre of German cultural life. With the change in the population in Hillbrow beginning in the 1980's the congregation saw a decline in German-speaking membership. The vibrant English services attract a growing number of black inner-city residents, coming from all over South Africa and other African countries. The congregation made a conscious decision to be a place of peace and well-being for all the people of its community.

The congregation decided to face the challenge of being an inner-city church and launched an Outreach Project in 1998, targeting the disadvantaged residents of Hillbrow, particularly children and youth, with cultural and developmental programmes. On any day of the week, the sounds of children playing in the daycare/crèche mingle with the tunes of musical instruments being practiced at the music school, while youth explore meaning and new avenues for their lives through drama and creative art. The Education Centre including mathematics tutoring and other skill-enhancing projects are also on the programme. The sound of bells calling people to services is a sign of hope for the community.

In all of this, the Friedenskirche offers the love of God to all the people around it. Through these developments, the church has become a centre and landmark of hope for many residents.

Present Ministries and Programmes:

Music School: Tuition in music and practice (in instruments such as recorders, piano, flute, marimba, trumpets) as a vehicle of beauty, skills development and discipline formation.

Kids' Week: Sharing the beauty of life and the joy Gospel with children left alone during school holidays.

Community Theatre: Drama Workshops with Muka and Hlalanathi Theatre Project, exploring questions of life and finding creative alternatives through expression in drama.

Sewing Group: Skills-training for self-employment.

Roly Poly Creche: in partnership with Metropolitan Evangelistic Services; Christian care and education for pre-school.

Education Centre: Provide education to out of school youth in partnership with SACHED and an environment conducive to study and supplementary tuition in mathematics to pupils.

Personal Development Workshops: skills and personal development for youth.

Youth Work: Gathering youth around the Gospel and away from temptations.

Sunday School/Children's church: Share the Gospel and worship with children who become little missionaries to the others.

Bible fellowship: Growth in faith and creating community fellowship.

Divine Service: Public, relevant and open worship, celebration and proclamation.

Open Church: A place of quietness during weekdays and over mid-day for prayer and meditation.

Steps Against Violence Programme: Awareness building and public involvement around issues such as; crime, littering, and substance abuse, in partnership with St. Enda's Community College and Barnato High School;.

Community Centre: A meeting place for the whole community-providing clean and safe space (halls and theatre) for use of public and private functions.

Community Involvement: Networking for broad-based community organizing (e.g. New Year 2000 campaign, environment, and housing) in community forums such as Joubert Park Neighborhood Development Association.

Ecumenical Network: Facilitating the churches acting and witnessing together. (E.g. Inner City Ministries Forum)

Despite challenges that we face as a congregation the Friedenskirche remains a home for all Lutherans in and around Johannesburg. Over the years we have seen a decline in the German speaking members and this could be as the result of people not feeling safe in Hillbrow anymore and moving to safer suburbs. Some members are old and frail and don't come to the Friedenskirche every Sunday. A lot of financial support is still obtained from these German speaking members. Offerings are still a challenge as most members do not contribute much

The English speaking service has increased quite tremendously but consists of people who come to the inner-city to look for employment or to study. On completion of their studies students normally go back home or find employment elsewhere. We are fortunate that we still have one service at the Friedenskirche on the first Sunday of every month for the German speaking members of the congregation.

We have a congregational council that consists of 4 male and 3 female, even though most of them have full employment they still manage to attend fully to the portfolio's they hold. We are supposed to have 9 members in total but every year we are unable to get members of the congregation to agree to serve on the congregational council.

At the end of April Pastor Kees Appelo left for Germany and we still do not have a replacement for him. We are grateful that we were not left stranded as we are getting assistance from the Bishop, the acting Dean and other pastors from our sister congregation. We also use the services of retired pastor Dieter Harms on some of the Sundays. We are also grateful that we do have ordained lay preachers who are preaching at Friedenskirche and the German Old Age Home. The congregational council is doing home and hospital visits with the help of the church choir. All administration duties that were done by the pastor are now left in the hands of the deputy chairperson of the congregational council.



Divine Services:

English, Friedenskirche: 8:30

German service: 10:30 (Every first Sunday of the month) Friedenskirche

German service: German Old Age Home: 1030

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Pastor: Vacant

Congregational Council: Chairperson: Mr. Phuti Thage
Deputy: Ms. Ann Mokhine
Treasurer: Dr. Robert Haegele
Secretary: Ms. Patience Kumalo
Congregational Work: Mrs Buyisiwe Matema
Deputy Congregational Work: Mr. Phillip Kgaphola
Maintenance: Mr. Phistus Tsire