**Recommitment to Compassion**

**Cape Town Interfaith Initiative** with Cape Flats Interfaith Declaration, Groote Kerk and others

With the passing of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu on 26 December 2021, we were inspired by his legacy of compassion to recommit to the Charter for Compassion which Archbishop Tutu helped to launch in Cape Town in 2010.

In 2014, City of Cape Town adopted the Charter for Compassion, but rescinded their membership of CANI (Compassionate Action Network International, the original container for the Charter) in 2019, with no explanation.

And so we were delighted when Councillor Mark Kleinschmidt, representing the City of Cape Town at the request of the Mayor, enthusiastically signed our Charter for Compassion Recommitment Book at the end of our ceremony.

This was a major step forward for Interfaith relations in Cape Town, and in our campaign to make Cape Town a Compassionate City for all her peoples. CTII Chairperson Rev Berry Behr said that justice and compassion are inseparable bedfellows, and that even though social justice may not be mentioned in CTII’s mission statement, it is implicit in the work of interfaith engagement.

Holding the event in the historic Groote Kerk was also significant. This is the church that provided the theology that upheld the apartheid system, and that is now focussed on working to heal the wounds of the past. Reverend Riaan de Villiers who is the leader of Groote Kerk, has led his community courageously into a future of unity and inclusion, working always to uphold social justice and unafraid to speak his heartfelt truth. Rev de Villiers said that holding the Recommitment to Compassion event at Groote Kerk was another step in the church’s path to restitution, to help put right the injustices of the past.

The support from the International Charter for Compassion was warmly welcomed with a Zoom presentation from Marilyn Turkovich, our first speaker, who told us what compassionate cities around the world are doing to make life better for all their citizens.

Father Michael Lapsley and Dr Alan Boesak are both giants of spiritual leadership in South Africa and around the world.

Father Lapsley, who lost both hands and an eye in a politically motivated letter bomb explosion in April 1990, spoke about the impact on his life of the kindness and compassion he received after that dreadful and life-shattering event. He later went on to work with victims of violence and torture, and in 1998 founded the Institution for the Healing of Memories.

Dr Alan Boesak is a veteran campaigner for social justice and sought many channels over the years to influence policy makers for the good of all. He also delivered a powerful speech and challenged the faith leaders of Cape Town to take the actions necessary to demonstrate true compassion. He also challenged the faith leaders to take up the causes of the social justice issues that are current, such as homelessness, poverty and the separations that remain in our society despite nearly 30 years of democracy.

Sadly, we ran out of time and could not have the dialogue that we had hoped to enjoy to include all those who had gathered for the Recommitment to Compassion. However, we ended with the signing of our Book of Compassion, and we were delighted that Councillor Mark Kleinschmidt representing the City of Cape Town was unequivocal in his enthusiasm and praise for the Charter, and said he would help us to spread its message as far and as wide as possible.