

Chairman's Report 2020 June Annual General Meeting

Dear Cape Town U3A members,

Warm greetings on behalf of the Executive Committee at this deeply challenging time, with the world in the grip of an extraordinary situation of painful trauma to our health and the economy due to Covid 19 virus pandemic. We miss each other, and wonder how you, reading this, are coping with the lockdown restrictions of the past many weeks. For each one of us, social isolation can be a tough hurdle to overcome, and our thoughts are with you, for physical protection and safety, and for strength in mind, body and spirit.

The first tribute must go to Sylvia Schrire, our beloved Founder of U3A in South Africa, which was born with the new century, here in Cape Town. She is truly an amazing lady, and has done wonders of encouragement with alternatives to our usual meetings and courses, within the new virtual reality of life. Several groups have started up again via Zoom, and Courseletters have been sent out by e-mail, detailing what is available – there are WhatsApp groups, Crosswords, Quizzes, and it is hoped more will grow. Communication is vital to our well-being. Some of you have phone chats regularly keeping in touch. If you need a listening ear, we would like very much to stay in contact. U3A is a support organisation, with care for our members a top priority, integral to the ethos of sharing knowledge and friendship. We are grateful for your subscriptions, and generosity. With Leonard Suransky as an advisory researcher, the Committee is donating R10, 000, each, from U3A funds, for two local food distribution schemes- charities in urgent need right now in nearby informal settlements: Ladles of Love & Philisa Abafazi. Do support them further.

U3A Committee has formed teams, and our very special thanks go to Hanns Bohle who is our Courses Co- Ordinator, and who has given us his time and dedication setting up Zoom meetings. The expertise of our technical team is invaluable- Thank you, Allen Lang for managing the website and communications, and Stefan Pretorius, our National U3A Co-Ordinator assisting with his many skills, information, and oversight, as well as John and Sherlayne McFarlane, whose hard work with registrations and communications does not go unappreciated. Angie Lumgair is our monies, database, and membership angel, alongside Eddie Landsberg in the Finances portfolio. Jenny Mostert works on the Newsletter, and Avril Galp is the face of administration, and with the McFarlanes does a sterling job under pressure at the Baxter tables. To all the assistants for administrative tasks- Christine Assam, Gnessa Glazer, Ernie Wynne, Di James, Fran Pocock, Kath Green, Peter Lawson- thank you, we are so grateful. To the latter two, well done with the Summer Socials programme. Peter contributed so much, and co-ordinated this so very well. Thank you. Derick Rule needs a particular mention. He is on the Committee heading up Tours, as he has done for some years, extremely successfully. He is an inspiration: efficient, empathy itself, and a man of great faith, arranging deposits to secure best value- ahead of receiving the bookings. Many of you have had fabulous experiences travelling with him. It is with much sadness that all the plans for this year have had to be cancelled.

Just as disappointing is the collapse of our much- anticipated celebrations for U3A's 20th birthday. The end of May, as I write this, would have seen us partying at the Baxter Theatre together, with eminent guest, Thuli Madonsela . Two other prime speakers we had been thrilled to secure were Zapiro (Jonathan Shapiro - "Careful – this pen is loaded!") in March, sadly after lockdown. April would have seen us welcoming Dr Taljaard (Head of Infectious Diseases at Tygerberg Hospital) to talk to us about the Corona Virus.

Course Leaders are the spine of U3A- serving with vision and commitment, most over many years. Past, present, and, we trust, future leaders- all you do in serving U3A is very much valued. We remember with gratitude and affection two members we have lost: Jen Pennink (Xhosa Course/ Guglethu U3A helping Sylvia) who enjoyed Dericks' May 2019 Eastern Cape Tour- including voting ! - died a few weeks later; and Brenda Shear, long standing champion of U3A, founder of summer Socials - whose illness claimed her in January.

A brief review of Baxter meetings: In June 2019 at our last AGM, Dr Ian Glass gave us an informative presentation on "200 years of the Cape Observatory". In July, Belinda Abrahams from SPCA brought our focus onto cruelty to animals, and we were glad to have had a collection of R6,000 to donate, as well as continued pledges to help- from your generosity. Paul Hoffman of "Accountability Now!" spoke to us in mid- September, contributing some light moments into a sombre topic. A lady speaker came to us in October: Rev. Berry Behr of Interfaith Initiative- with her perspective on "A strategy for restoration of community" and we ended the year on a hot morning in November with Nic Ciro and Hadley Tituss, of FMR (the Fine Music station 101.3 broadcasting at Artscape). These enterprising presenters experimented with expanding their radio show to theatre: "Oh..my word!" We said farewell and thanks to Paul Faure, after many years on the Committee, as Liaison for a number of various educational and other initiatives, across communities: we are grateful for longstanding and substantial commitment.

Only 2 Baxter General Meetings have taken place in this our year of 2020: January being full to capacity for Judge Dennis Davis asking the question "Can Constitutional democracy survive in South Africa?" and equally outstanding, Don Pinnock, Criminologist, spoke on the topic of "Cape Town- Gang town" in February- a view into the diverse realities of our city.

Lastly, as we continue to go through a very different reality than we could possibly have imagined: to each of you, a virtual bouquet, for your contribution to U3A Cape Town. The applause around the Baxter is in our hearts until we meet again.

Jeanie Hareb