

**Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home**  
The Home is based in Epworth, a suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe.

**We give support, mainly by cash but also by advice and assistance, to the Home for the benefit of the Children.**

Newsletter  
March 2003

**Support for Children**

**Latest News from the Children's Home**

Dear Friends,

We congratulate the Matthew Rusike Children's Home Superintendent and his staff on maintaining the care of the children in this difficult time of shortages. Reports show that good care is being delivered, though food, medicine and petrol are all in short supply.

We are very grateful for the brochure and newsletters which have been a valued help in making people aware of the Home and for the Christmas cards which have raised significant funds as well as illuminating our homes at Christmas with smiling faces.

We are very grateful to the many donors, whose generosity is shown in the Treasurer's report, especially to the Southampton District Network members.

Looking forward, we need to consider our priorities for the future in support of the Home and we should continue to plan for a visit by the Superintendent.

We are grateful to Barry Barnes for the support and vision of the future possibilities that he is giving on behalf of NCH, to the Home.

Although the Home is far away, we are fortunate to have had several messages from people who have had contact with the Home and these have given valuable insight into its affairs. We thank Margaret James for her very moving letter which is summarised here.

The Treasurer has been in touch with the Superintendent by phone (land line) and had been assured of receipt of our donations.

The Superintendent has sent an analysis of the Home's budget for 2002 and an estimate for 2003 and had thanked the Secretary by email for the gift of a doll which we sent when we heard their one doll was worn out.

Mrs Banham also has had emails from staff at the Home.

The overall message coming from all these contacts was that conditions are very difficult but the children are being looked after.

**Extracts from a letter from the Rev Margaret James**

Greetings,

The Zimbabwe countryside is looking nice and green both because we have had some good rain recently, and also because large areas are lying uncultivated. The food situation is very difficult indeed. Yesterday my Houseworker's granddaughter went out at 6am to queue at a food shop but the Police, Prison staff, Hospital staff were served first and then there was only enough left for the people who had slept all night outside the shop. Bread is very hard to find and people queue hours for one loaf. When some wheat was accidentally spilt and the Grain Marketing Board had gathered up all they could, the local people carefully swept up all the loose soil and cereal and then picked out the individual wheat seeds to grind for food. Maize is almost unobtainable. We have been given some relief money from the church but people say please give us maize, money is little use without the maize to buy. We have been seeking an allocation of maize to send to our churches in the worst hit areas but without success.

Medical drugs are very difficult to obtain. One old lady had a stroke at Christmas because she could not obtain the tablets she needed to reduce her high blood pressure. Another old lady has to pay 1000 Zim Dollars each week for essential diuretic pills. (This is only 78p to us but is a fortune to her.)

I had not seen any petrol for sale since before Christmas until last week and diesel is also hard to find. This makes it very difficult to move around. When it was time to renew the annual insurance on the car, instead

of reducing in value as the car depreciated, the Zimbabwe dollar value was tripled which means that in effect the money had depreciated by at least three times.

Ownership of the farms is a major issue, some local activists say all the farms will be run by locals soon, while others say that the government wishes to retain some white farmers so that they can grow wheat next season.

Inevitably, rumours fly around so you do not know who to believe.

A minister serves the whole congregation, but in some cases one congregation can include both white farmers and the local people who now occupy their farms so that there are major personal problems. But problems are not just between white and coloured people. Local people who used to live in good accommodation on the farm, may now find their homes given to others and they are left to build themselves temporary shelters wherever they can. Life is very, very difficult.

### **Future Priorities.**

The AGM confirmed that the care of the children remains our main concern and the current situation means we need to be able to continue our support for the foreseeable future. To do this we now hold a fund and pay from this to the Home each month.

The NCH and the Methodist JMA funds are focussed more on developing new services to expand support for children. This might mean setting up family units instead of one large Home, along the lines pursued in the UK. This will require one off capital funding to create smaller buildings in the grounds of the Home in Harare and also possibly in other parts of Zimbabwe. When we see firm plans that are for the children's benefit, we may give support.

### **Comments from Zimbabwe**

"Prayers are needed here for us to survive the gruesome economy. May God help us, enough is enough."

"Price hikes are commonplace, money is hard to come by and prices are incredible"

"Our visitors were very shocked on the situation in this country. We can only use the car for emergencies; I walk everywhere."

### **Treasurer's Report**

At the AGM, the Treasurer reported a very generous increase in Donations.

He had sent £21,000 to the Home in 2002 and we hold a fund in hand towards the coming year's costs in line with Charity Commission guidelines.

The high rate of inflation in Zimbabwe, continues, the exchange rate has gone from 300 to 1,589 Zimbabwe Dollars per £1. We continue to send cash monthly from our account direct into the Home's account in Harare and we expect the Superintendent to acknowledge receipt. This way we know the funds reach the Home.

The Superintendent has sent us a helpful analysis of income and expenditure for 2002 but it is difficult to forecast for 2003 because of the inflation. The funds we sent were approximately 70% of the cost of food, clothing, schooling, staff and the animal / handicraft out-of-school activities. Sales of surplus items from the animal and handicrafts activities, set up to give training to the children, brought in more useful income.

Our primary aim continues to be the welfare of the children, however we had received a detailed estimate of costs of training in Carpentry for the current year. The AGM agreed this was another useful skill being taught to the children and that we should fund this work, with a payment of £1,000.

All donors may be pleased to know that the Friends group is a very low cost activity and almost all funds are used for the benefit of the Children at the Home. Our officers and members are volunteers who pay their own expenses and work from their homes. Our expenses last year, apart from printing the Christmas Cards and the part cost of printing the FoMRCH Brochure, were only £303.63. This included the cost of

remitting funds to Zimbabwe.

A further £100 was contributed by NCH for postage.

We remind people on our mailing list that annual subscriptions are due at the start of the year, though donations are very welcome at any time.

Finally while saying a very warm thank you for all your generous donations, we must inform you that we can only predict a continuing need for support for the next few years. The contributions which your gifts make possible, are essential to maintain the care of these children and help them to grow towards a useful life in Zimbabwe.

The FoMRCH Treasurer is:  
Mr P Coles  
padjen@ukonline.co.uk

### **Have you got news for us?.**

We are grateful to the Rev Margaret James for her comments on life in Zimbabwe. If any readers have any news of MRCH which can be shared with members, please send it to the Secretary.

We were very saddened to hear that Barry Barnes has recently suffered a bereavement and we send our warm condolences to him and his family.

### **Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home**

#### **Notices.**

1. The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday the 7th of February 2004 at Wesley House Birmingham (ex Methodist International House) at 2.00pm. Lunch at 1.00pm. All members are invited to attend.
2. The next Executive meeting will be held on the 5th of April at Wesley House Birmingham.
3. We are hoping the MRCH Superintendent will visit the UK later this year, to familiarise him with current childcare practises. We will take the opportunity to ask him to talk about the work of the Home as widely as possible.
4. In the last issue we reported that our Chair John Bromley felt it was time for a change after 8 years of leadership. We were delighted when Mrs Carol Banham agreed at the AGM to be designated as our next Chair person from the February 2004 AGM. John will remain on the Executive so we will still have the benefit of his ideas.
5. If you are planning a meeting or fund raising event to support MRCH, we can supply leaflets, posters, videos and will be pleased to supply speakers wherever possible. Please contact the Chair or the Secretary at any time.
6. If you have good ideas for fund raising, please let us know so that we can inform all our members.

This is a Newsletter distributed by the  
Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home  
Chair Mr John Bromley  
Secretary Mrs Shirley Richer