

## Matthew Rusike Children's Home update – September 2005

We were very privileged to host Astonishment Mapurisa (Superintendent of the Children's Home) and his wife Bridgetty on their visit to the UK in July this year. When we finally met – about 2 hours later than scheduled (we were waiting for each other at different exits of New Street Station and I hadn't taken the mobile phone with me!), it was like meeting old friends. They were delightful guests and by the end of the three nights they were with us, I really felt as if I had been back in Zimbabwe.

They brought news of the work of the Children's Home, which despite the political situation is actually expanding and developing, both in provision of residential care and outreach into the community. The video Astonishment brought with him, which was shown at the meeting at Cambridge Road Methodist Church on 12<sup>th</sup> July was very inspiring – it's good to see what the money we are raising is achieving.

On a personal level, the thing that struck me most was the character of both Astonishment and Bridgetty. Their willingness to learn from childcare practice in the UK; their commitment to provide **quality** care for the children (not just housing them); their determination to continue with the decentralisation programme – taking the Matthew Rusike model to other cities in Zimbabwe and also out into the community. And all this against a background few of us can begin to imagine – difficulties of supply, funding, increasing costs – yet they appeared undaunted. Astonishment didn't speak much about the political situation, but it was clear from the video that the prevalence of AIDS; scarcity and cost of medical services and implementation of Government initiatives such as the clearing of slum areas, is increasing demand for the services provided by the Children's Home.

All of this inspired me to arrange a summer Garden Party to raise funds for the Home, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September at our house. I sent leaflets out to friends and neighbours as well as publicising the event at Church and was amazed by the response. People offered to bake cakes and scones; some made jams and marmalades; others made cards, ginger beer, pot-pouri sachets and bags. One friend offered to run a table-top sale for me, which encouraged me to have a bit of a clear out!

As the day neared, I was tracking the weather forecasts and praying that the weather would be fine. We did have a contingency plan for moving things indoors, but in the end we didn't need it. The weather stayed fine – not too hot, but no rain which was the main thing. My husband heroically took both our children (aged 3½ years & 5 months) to the supermarket on the morning of the

Garden Party - to get last minute supplies yes, but chiefly to get them from under my feet so I could get things ready.

We served cream teas, had a cake stall, a table top sale and two tom bolas – one for the children. We also showed the video Astonishment had brought, which helped put into context why we were raising money – particularly as a lot of people attending didn't know much about the Home. After a slow start, business was brisk and we managed to sell most of the cakes, all the jams and most of the other hand-made items, raising a total of **£454.36**, which was an excellent achievement.