

One of the babies was with the house mother but the rest were all together with a couple of carers.

While the babies looked well fed they were extremely quiet and looked to me that they needed some stimulation. There were just a few toys on the floor, just small ones, not little tricycles or other toys leading to activity. There had been some difficulty with milk for the babies but this had been resolved with Nestlé.

I am pleased to report to supporters here that their money is reaching the home and being well used. Now that the American dollar is the currency used things have stabilised. There is plenty of food and a great variety, expensive and mainly imported from South Africa. This is fine for those with dollars! The various people I stayed with in Harare had had no municipal water for three years, there were regular electricity cuts and some telephones were off. Roads were full of potholes. power poles leaning badly and traffic lights often not working. It will take a long time to improve all the services.

However, I thoroughly enjoyed my stay and meeting old friends and former students with the twenty years rolling away since I was working there.

(We intend putting Sheila's photos on our website)

Stop Press from Barry

In an email this week Astonishment reports that Lloyd (deputy superintendent at the home) spent a

week at Marsh Memorial Home, a Methodist Home in Cape Town, as part of an exchange arrangement that has just started.

Astonishment and Raira went to the inter Homes meeting in South Africa where I saw them both and they too benefit [and contribute positively as well] from the regional links. There will be a new Chair of the National MRCH Board to replace Marsden later this year.

Astonishment is looking forward to his trip and I know he is keen to assist in making new links.

Barry Barnes

Would you like to receive this newsletter by email? Just let us know.

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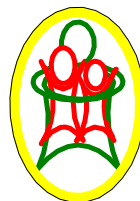
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Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

June 2009

Report from Action for Children Service Development Advisor (Zimbabwe) Barry Barnes

Astonishment continues to recover from his traumatic attack earlier this year and from now on he will be flying to SA for the important meetings with heads of other childcare organisations and Action for Children. The Presiding Bishop's view is that "he was spared for a reason, and that we must be sure that he is enabled to continue his work".

The Presiding Bishop, the National Chair (Marsden Sibanda) and Astonishment acknowledge that developments at MRCH have slowed dramatically over the last couple of years, largely as a result of conditions prevailing in the country, but have re-committed themselves to finishing the project at Mzinyathi and moving forward on the redevelopment of the crèche. There are challenges in sourcing the material and keeping up with the costs of building, but the crèche is on its way.

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

The Home has already lost some of the newly appointed Development Officers and the Transitions Officer, some of whom have gone to work for international NGOs and one of whom has taken a lecturing post in Botswana. This will continue as Zimbabwe loses young professionals who are looking to do the best for their families

Other long standing staff have remained at the Home, which has continued to find ways to mitigate the worst effects of inflation. The new "off shore" account in Botswana is working well and will be of some assistance but we expect dollar inflation to raise the costs of salaries and foodstuffs over the next few months

School fees will also have to be paid in dollars, so the Qantas contribution remains essential to the overall MRCH programme.

At MRCH, the piggery is being maintained at a basic stock level, and will only be developed again when there are sufficient resources to pay for the food required to start a breeding programme. Similarly, chickens will be reintroduced when resources allow. All the houses on the campus have their own

vegetable gardens and the main garden is being restocked as well. The second manually operated borehole, at the bottom end of the garden will then come into its own as well. Overall, the landscaping of the entrance drive and outside the various houses/offices is making a difference to the look of the place.

The Presiding Bishop is coming to the UK to attend Conference at the beginning of July and will be meeting with the Friends and Action for Children

Astonishment and Bridgetty are looking forward to their visit to the UK in October this year

And, last but not least, the children continue to do well and my impression is that they have been shielded from some of the worst effects of the situation in Zimbabwe by being in a safe and generally secure environment at MRCH. They have had food to eat, clothes to wear and a loving space in which to develop and grow. Long may MRCH continue to offer such a service.

Barry Barnes

Mr and Mrs Mapurisa to visit UK

Once again we, the Friends, are sponsoring Astonishment and Bridgetty to visit the UK. Their itinerary is well underway and they will be in London, Newton le Willows, Doncaster, Norwich, Bedford, Oxford, Lechlade, Birmingham, Bristol, Ringwood and Orpington. Anyone wishing to attend

any meetings or services which will be arranged in these areas please contact Carol Banham (chair) for details.

Astonishment writes

“We are working on a new DVD and hope it will be helpful. We will see if it can show some footage of the crèche developments.”

Welcome

We welcome to FoMRCH executive committee- Mr Matthew Rusike, Rev Ed Standhaft and Rev Audrey Standhaft, we look forward to their knowledge and support.

Joint meeting

In May there was a joint meeting with Action for Children, World Church Relationships Office of MCB & FoMRCH in order to share proposed plans for the future support of childcare in Zimbabwe. It was agreed that these groups would be involved in the meeting with Bishop Sithole in June and that AfC and FoMRCH will collaborate in Astonishment's planned visit to the UK. AfC will continue to build a partnership in their work in Zimbabwe and MCB will continue to explore wider Zimbabwe links and meet Astonishment during his visit to the UK in October .

News from Friends

We are always pleased to have reports from friends. In our last newsletter we heard from Debbie

Berrill who ran a half marathon to raise funds. Here she is.....



This time it's Mal Pratt and Sheila Williams who have contributed to our newsletter.

From Mal

I thought you would be glad to hear that I have today sent cheques to the value of £1550 to Paddy as a result of my (very greedy, but all inclusive) celebrations on reaching 60. I couldn't have managed the London Marathon - but was able to meet, greet and entertain family and friends while raising awareness and funds for MRCH. I believe that there could be one or two other groups interested in supporting the Home, but we have to wait and see.

Thank you for the publicity materials you have let me have and use. I think I shall be able to return the videos shortly.

Again, bless you for the work you do to enable our giving to such a worthwhile effort.

From Sheila

I managed to visit the Matthew Rusike Home when in Zimbabwe in April. My friend and I were shown around but being school holidays there were no children there. They had all either gone to family or to people who fostered them during school holidays or were out having extra tuition.

I was impressed with what I saw.

The three family units were well furnished with a sitting room, carpeted and with easy chairs and a T.V. and bedrooms, two older children to a room or four younger ones in bunk beds. There was a bathroom and toilet in each house and a well equipped kitchen with cooker, fridge etc.



The sewing room had about ten sewing machines and an over locker and half-finished choir gowns were hanging up. They also make school uniforms and various overalls etc. to order. Two of the staff were seated outside hand sewing as there was an electricity cut. I experienced one of these most days. This room had solar panels and the plan is for more.