



Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

A UK charity supporting Matthew Rusike Children's Home in Zimbabwe

Newsletter, March 2026

Report from the Home



Greetings from Zimbabwe.

The year has started well with rains in January bringing hopes of a good harvest. The Home has enough stocks of basic foodstuffs to last until June, exceptions being cooking oil and salt. We're also short of toiletries such as soap and toothpaste, but are looking to local Methodist circuits to cover these gaps.

As well as providing food for the children, the crops we grow on site also provide revenue from sales. Our piggery is doing well with a recent donation of five sows doubling our total to ten. Late last year we also received a donation of 300 day-old chicks and now offer broiler chickens for sale.

Reducing our debt remains a pressing issue. This is largely the result of higher staff salaries and related statutory obligations both to current staff and to those we've had to lay off. As reported in previous newsletters, we continue to cut costs by reducing the number of children in our care. So far, we have closed two of our houses to bring our total to 65 children compared to 82 a year ago. Of the 17 children discharged, some were taken in by foster families and others were reunited with families and relatives.

Six children took O-level exams in November. One is now studying for A-level at Kwenda Mission while the remaining five have been enrolled at Chaminuka Vocational Training Centre. One child receiving support under our community programme in Donga did extremely well at Grade 7 under difficult circumstances.

We are delighted to have completed a new classroom block for the Matthew Rusike

Academy, partly funded by Solihull Methodist Church in the UK. This was officially opened on 29 January by the Presiding Bishop, Rev Simbarashe Sithole, and is now being used by learners in Grades 2 and 3. We recently took on five new academic staff whose salaries are covered by school fees paid by learners at the Academy.

During the December holiday, a group of 16 children stayed with foster families and 11 girls visited the Pamusha Cultural Centre at Goromonzi to learn more about local culture. The two groups greatly enjoyed their experiences while the children who remained at the Home had a wonderful Christmas party.

All our children are in good health and our clinic currently has most of the essential drugs it needs for children and staff. We remain extremely grateful for the support of our friends in the UK and extend our prayers and greetings to you all.

Rev Linny Mutendzwa
National Director



The opening of the new classroom block and the plaque acknowledging the contribution of Solihull Methodist Church



On to the next phase: Three Matthew Rusike girls and two boys were enrolled at Chaminuka Vocational Training Centre in January. The girls are taking a hotel and catering course while the boys have opted for agriculture and motor mechanics. We wish them all success.

Founder member Paddy Coles



We were sad to learn of the death of Paddy Coles just after Christmas. Paddy's link with Matthew Rusike goes back to 1995 when he and his wife Jenny visited the Home as volunteers and tiled some of the bathrooms. He was later instrumental in setting up the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home as a registered UK charity. As a Trustee and Treasurer for over 20 years, he's fondly remembered not only for his financial expertise but for the gentle humour that lightened many a committee discussion.

Jenny asked that donations at his funeral should go to the Home, specifically to the clinic and for purchasing educational supplies. At the last count, the amount raised was £2,500.

Welcome to our new Trustee

We're delighted that Annah Mwadiwa has agreed to join the Friends' committee as a Trustee. Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Annah now lives in Hampshire and is a Methodist local preacher. Her career has spanned banking, manufacturing, finance, hospitality, nursing and running her own domiciliary care business. She's a founder member of the Methodist Church Zimbabwe Fellowship in the UK, having previously served in Zimbabwe as National Treasurer of the Ruwadzano/Manyano women's organisation and chaired the Building Committee for the Epworth Women's Centre, a project devoted to empowering women in the community.



Passionate about protecting and nurturing vulnerable children, Annah felt deeply drawn to support the work of Matthew Rusike Children's Home. As a Trustee, she brings skills in governance, financial stewardship and strategic support, all of which will be invaluable in supporting the work and development of the Home.

Zimbabwe visit



Our news contact, Debbie Berrill, recently visited the Home along with the outreach centres at Donga and Mzinyathi and we'll include a full report of her trip in our June edition. While she was there, she met the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Rev Simbarashe Sithole, who asked her to pass on profound thanks to the Friends for their unwavering support over many years. The Bishop comments:

“The Friends have made possible so many of the developments that have taken place over the years. There have been other sponsors and supporters from time to time, but we know the Friends have always been reliable and haven't forgotten the Home. Although things are very difficult at the moment, both at the Home and in Zimbabwe more widely, the Home remains at the heart of the work of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and we very much want to continue the work started by Rev Rusike. The challenges are great, but we believe with God's grace we'll be able to achieve our vision for the Home to be really thriving when we celebrate 50 years of Methodist independence in 2027. We're very grateful that you, the Friends, continue your support so faithfully.”

The Bishop also extends an open invitation to anyone able to join the 50th anniversary celebrations in August next year.

UK fundraising

Ben Rhydding Primary School takes up the challenge

After the fundraising efforts of Ben Rhydding Methodist Church reported in our last newsletter, Ben Rhydding Primary School has swung into action with its own fundraising campaign. It started with children in Years 1 and 2 learning about Africa as part of their geography topic and an invitation to our news contact, Debbie Berrill, to go in and talk about life in Zimbabwe and the Home in particular.

The children were eager to help. On their own initiative, they planned a sponsored mini-sports activity day (star jumps, laps of the netball court, tossing beanbags into a bucket and much more) along with a lucky dip for which they contributed their own unwanted toys and books.

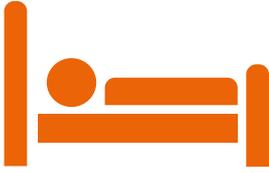
The event took place after school on 30 January and, despite the rain, raised an amazing £683. This will be used to help equip the new classroom block opened at the Home on 29 January. Thanks and huge congratulations to all the children and staff who made this possible.



The Ben Rhydding children present their fundraising ideas to the school at a special assembly

... and in other news

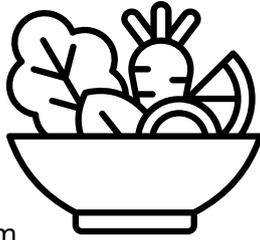
Furniture upgrades



Alongside our regular remittances to the Home, we've recently been able to fund new furniture such as sofas and mattresses for the houses and equipment for the newly opened classrooms – another step in making life better for the Matthew Rusike children.

Investment plans

Following the opening of the new classroom in January, the Home hopes to raise funds to build a further classroom block able to accommodate all learners up to Grade 7. Another project under consideration is to turn the former dining hall into a solar-powered cold room to keep perishable food fresh on those frequent occasions when the electricity fails.



Members' subs



If you're a member of Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home (and so have voting rights at the AGM), the annual subscription of £10 needs to have been paid in January. This doesn't apply to supporters who make regular payments by standing order. Thank you to all those who have so far renewed their membership – and a gentle nudge to others!

A reminder of our bank details:

Account name:

Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

Sort code: 08-92-99

Account number: 65869309



Young Matthew Rusike learners in the Home's Early Child Development centre

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