

HOPE FADING FOR ZIMBABWE

Whilst the Gaza problem continues to dominate the media, Zimbabwe's misery appears forgotten as most of the world looks the other way. A **trillion** dollar note has now been issued – about enough to buy 6 loaves of bread puts the UK's 'credit crunch' into perspective! The following extract from a letter (see complete version plus photos on our website: <http://www.standrewsurc.org/>) by David Harold-Barry at Silveira House is a chilling reminder:

'Two pictures have haunted me this week. The first is of a woman lying in a Harare street with her child playing close by. A frequent sight? Yes, but this time the woman is dead. And her child doesn't know it and continues to play. People begin to realise and gather and stare. And the child doesn't understand. Eventually a woman covers the body with a chitenge cloth. The second picture is of an uncle rushing his child to the hospital. The boy took poison to end his painful life. The uncle is desperate and asks the nurses to help but they are on strike and refuse. 'At least tell me what to do to save him,' he pleads. But they refuse again and the child dies in his arms.

These are two snapshots behind all the statistics and news reports. The media you read focuses from time on our country as our tortured history is punctuated by moments of hope always, so far, leading to disappointment and further twists of the screw, ever tightening the grip of hopelessness people feel. A further woe – cholera – has been added to the already long list: inflation beyond description, impossibility of actually getting your hands on the money you earn, starvation now threatening five million, around ninety percent of schools not functioning, unavailability of medicines, no water in some of the high density suburbs, seeds and fertiliser scarce and expensive as we face a new growing season, the press gagged, the prisons overcrowded and the whole political process blocked.'

David mentions cholera. Several artists and their families were badly affected around Christmas. Nicodemus has been dreadfully ill. Lizeni was rushed to hospital where it was 'touch and go' for a while. Her mother and twin brother Godwin also caught the disease (see photos on church notice boards). Godwin lost his son to cholera a few months ago. He told me how distraught the family were at the thought of losing Lizeni, 'the pillar of the family.' The official death toll from cholera is now well over 2000 rising daily, but the true figure is suspected to be far higher. The £907 share of our Gift Day donations plus proceeds from sculpture sales helped SH and the artists in so many ways and undoubtedly saved lives. Whilst watching the grandchildren over the festive period swamped by presents, I felt rather uncomfortable and could not get the image of a photo sent over the internet out of my mind. The photo taken by Andrew out in the bush where he is now forced to live, shows a neighbour, McDonald Mukanya and his family sitting forlornly on the earthen floor of the most modest of huts around a little fire. Their worldly possessions consist of a few cooking pots and a little pile of clothes – that's it! A dreadfully poor family whose house was burned down; no food or employment; desperately looking for help. McDonald helps Andrew maintain his little patch of maize. Fortunately, I had just received a generous

donation from a member of the congregation which I managed to get to the family within a week – Andrew said McDonald fell to his knees in gratitude.

Our support continues to be of enormous practical value. Some artists managed to buy and sow seed before the rains and Andrew bought poles to construct a roof for his modest home. The co operative have formally made an application for their own office at Silveira House and have kept aside some funds to pay for the running and maintenance of the laptop we sent out last year. The laptop will ease communication problems and ensure lots of photos and give them all a window to the world. Mike is busy organizing transport to collect and purchase raw stone from mines in the mountains to ensure continuity of work for the group. These are only a few examples showing how your donations keep body and soul alive. Please note a good friend who supports a leper colony in Zimbabwe and has helped us several times in the past, will travel out mid February and would be delighted to take over any donations in cash which will go direct to those most in need.

In a few days, I will receive eleven green malachite necklaces made by the Nasho family so if anyone is interested please let me know quickly as they are extremely popular. Finally, I met Walton Library's manager recently and on behalf of St Andrew's, donated an attractive sculpture titled 'The Readers' carved by Coster Balakasi which will hopefully soon be on display. Some of the congregation may have noticed another piece donated by the group - 'Bible Reader' by Mike Masedza - positioned on the window ledge in the Church porch. **Johnston Simpson**



'THE READERS' by Coster Balakasi



McDonald Mukanya and family



Lizeni waiting to go to hospital-- Nico at home with cholera -- Raw sewage outside Nicos home



Costa, wife & child at home Andrew's wife weeding maize patch Lizeni's home shared with 11 others