



## Croydon -Zimbabwe Link June 2013

### *Linking the Croydon Episcopal Area of the Diocese of Southwark with the Diocese of Central Zimbabwe*

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## NEWS FROM THE NATION

### Elections look set for July

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has now said that elections will be held by the end of July in line with a court order, angering rivals who want them delayed to allow for reforms to ensure a fair vote.



Following the referendum accepting the new Constitution in March (see picture left), the way was cleared for elections, which had to be held within four months of the end of the current parliament on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The Constitutional Court ruled on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May that parliamentary and presidential polls must take place before July 31 and that Mugabe must set a date for them before June 29. The Zimbabwe

Broadcasting Corporation quoted Mugabe as saying he would comply with the court decision and would set the date after consulting Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa.

A major problem remains the cost of the election process, estimated at \$132 million. Zimbabwe has appealed to SADC (Southern African Development Community) and to the United Nations for funding, but there has been disagreement over what conditions should be attached. The ZANU-PF party wants as few strings as possible and has accused other nations of interfering, while Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC party is keen to attach a condition bringing in election observers to ensure fairness.

The new constitution clips the powers of the president and imposes a two-term limit. However it does not apply retroactively, so technically Mugabe, now aged 89 could continue for another decade!

Meanwhile uncertainty over the election date has been pushing Zimbabwe's fragile economy closer to recession once more.

### **Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative**

The churches of Zimbabwe have all come together to launch a new initiative for peace during the election period. The three major bodies of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (headed up by Bishop Ishmael) have been collaborating on the new initiative entitled the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe. The umbrella group formed to run the initiative, the Heads of Christian Denominations in Zimbabwe, describes its reasons and purpose as follows:

*“Once again as we approach national elections, we share with the common person the concern and realization of the enduring risk of political tension and violence that has accompanied our political processes. This concern is informed by our past experience of intolerance, intimidation and violence... These have led us to a realisation that we need to be proactive in the promotion of peace. We realise that a peaceful electoral process will require a commitment to act differently in our politics by all concerned...”*

*EPOIZ is our joint initiative which signals our intention and commitment to having a united advocacy voice and coordinating programmes for monitoring and responding to violence and human rights abuses... The initiative has two specific goals which are: to promote peace in Zimbabwe and overcome the culture of intolerance, intimidation and political violence and to facilitate forgiveness, national healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.”*

Over the next few months the organisation will be carrying out many activities aimed at the realisation of these objectives. In doing this it has solidarity and support from the regional and international church, and also from The Elders, an independent group of global leaders who work for the promotion of peace and human rights. Brought together by Nelson Mandela, the Elders is now chaired by Kofi Annan, and includes such members as Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, Graca Machel and Jimmy Carter.

Bishop Ishmael reports that in April he led a delegation of church leaders to Johannesburg to meet with regional church leaders, and that they have also met with President Mugabe.

### **Restoration in Manicaland and Harare**

There were great celebrations in Mutare in April when the Anglican cathedral of St John the Baptist was rededicated and reaffirmed as part of the Anglican Diocese of Manicaland after five years of its occupation by break-away bishop Elson Jakazi. The service marked the climax of the victory over Jakazi following the court verdict in February this year and the restoration of all church property to its rightful ownership.



*Bishop Julius Makoni knocking symbolically on the door of Mutare cathedral in 2011, during the visit of Archbishop Rowan Williams. This year he was allowed in.*

However Jakazi still retains support in some quarters and has set up his own church which has been joined by a number of ex-Anglicans.

In Harare the renovation has continued of church buildings left in a bad state after their illegal occupation. Bishop Chad Gandiwa reports that parishioners are happy to have returned to their building, but *“they are still hurting”*. He adds *“The church needs to find new ways of teaching on healing and forgiveness”*.

## NEWS FROM CENTRAL ZIMBABWE

### Hospital building progresses.

Bishop Ishmael reports that there is *“remarkable progress”* on the hospital with roofing nearly completed for Phase One and part of Phase Three of the project.



### Rural Rectories.

Seven rural rectories have now been roofed, some are already occupied and all should be officially opened this year. Another two rectories are also underway.

The new rectory at St Andrew’s Gangarabwe is shown (left). The new priest is already in residence.

### St Patrick’s Farm

*“A lot is happening,”* reports Bishop Ishmael *“but we have not started getting the results we want yet.”* Nevertheless the pig project is in profit, the vegetable garden is fully irrigated and enough beef is being produced for the school needs.

### Harben Park Horticultural Project

A lot of progress is reported on this project with the employment of a new manager Darlington Musekiwa with *“passion, experience and qualifications in agriculture”*. A drip irrigation system has now been installed thanks to donations from the Link. Tomatoes, potatoes, rape and onions are currently growing. 55% of the plot is now under cultivation, and the diocese is now trying to recover the remainder of the land from a neighbour who had begun to use it.



*Installed drip irrigation pipes*



*Tomato and potato crops*

### **More building and decorating**

The diocesan offices in Gweru have been given a facelift with exterior painting and retiling, paid for by the Men's Group and contributions from parishes.

The new kitchen and dining room of the diocesan centre at St Patrick's Mission has also been completed.



*Newly painted diocesan offices in Gweru*



*New dining block at St Patrick's*

### **President visits for funeral**

The recent funeral service of the wife of the former Governor of the Midlands Province became a major and rather complicated event when President Mugabe decided to attend. Bishop Ishmael led the service at St Cuthbert's Cathedral which was scheduled for 10am but unable to begin until the President's arrival after 1pm. The burial was not completed until 5pm.

### **NEWS FROM THE LINK**

#### **Report from Len Abram's visit to Gweru**

Len visited Gweru for a weekend at the end of April, fitted in between business commitments in the country. He reports:

*I met with Bishop Ishmael and Rev Austin July on the Saturday, as the Bishop was travelling to South Africa on Sunday. On Sunday I attended the service at St Cuthbert's Cathedral which was very lively and inspiring as ever. In the afternoon I visited the Harben Park Garden which was impressive, and then met with the Diocesan Link Committee, including Mr Musekiwa, newly-appointed Diocesan Development Officer and HIV Aids Co-ordinator. They reiterated the diocesan strategy to achieve self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on foreign contributions. There was agreement that parish to parish links are very important, but that they need to be strengthened carefully to ensure that right relationships are built - neither patronising nor demeaning. Linked parishes need to share their histories and find common ground. There is a great deal of scope for sharing prayer needs and news. It was agreed that the links need to be channelled through both dioceses link structures to provide oversight and support.*

*Various ideas discussed for possible future activities included:*

- *student exchanges or gap year exchanges,*
- *joint clergy retreats alternately in Zimbabwe or England,*
- *support for clergy in Zim by provision of theological books,*
- *utilising the internet more effectively for links.*

### **Report from meeting of ZANE**

One of our Link committee Charles Bradshaw recently attended a meeting of ZANE, a charity set up to help elderly Zimbabwean whites unable to support themselves since the collapse of the Zim dollar. An address was given by the British ambassador to Zimbabwe, Deborah Bronnert, who charted some of the improvements in the country since the financial catastrophe of 2008: life expectancy now up to 48 years, economic growth up by 7%, the media is more open and criticism of the government is now tolerated. Another speaker was Dr Blessing Miles Tendi, who commented on how British politics has tended to demonise President Mugabe. He noted that the Zim economy is still fragile, corruption is still a problem and there is concern about electoral rolls. However, there is hope that forthcoming elections might pass off fairly and peacefully.

### **An Act of Prayer for Zimbabwe - Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June**

There will be a gathering at St John's Waterloo at 3.30pm on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June to pray for Zimbabwe, in commemoration of Bernard Mizeki, Zimbabwe's first Anglican martyr, and in thanksgiving for the restoration and rededication of churches, schools and clinics.

This will be a relatively low-key event this year, due to the untimely death of Alison Warner, the Kingston Zim Link co-ordinator, who had been planning it on behalf of all the Southwark Diocesan links with Zimbabwe. However, prayer does not demand frills or formality, but simply a heart of concern, so please join us. All are welcome.

### **ADVANCE NOTICE: Parish to Parish Links Meeting Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November**

A meeting has been planned for Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November, venue to be confirmed, to explore further, along with Bishop Jonathan, how we might build up existing parish to parish links with Central Zimbabwe and foster new ones.

### **POINTERS FOR PRAYER**

- Pray for Bishop Ishmael in his pivotal role in the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and his involvement in the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative.
- Pray for resolution on the timing of elections and that they will be fair and free from violence and intimidation.
- Pray for Anglicans in the dioceses of Harare and Manicaland that the work of their parishes will be rebuilt, that there will be healing of hurts and that forgiveness and reconciliation will take place.
- Pray for the final completion of rural rectories and for the new young priests and their families who will be occupying them.
- Pray for the work of St Patrick's Mission and the diverse activities there: the High School and Primary School, the Farm, Diocesan Centre and the Clinic. Pray for all those who try to steer these vital works.

#### **To contact us:**

On general matters contact Ann Wright on [wright@btinternet.com](mailto:wright@btinternet.com)

On education matters contact Trudy Baker on [andyandtrudy@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:andyandtrudy@blueyonder.co.uk)

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