

Diocese of Southwark

Croydon Episcopal Area Zimbabwe Link

Dear *Croydon Episcopal Area Parish*

Thank you for your interest in exploring a link between your church and a parish or project in the Diocese of Central Zimbabwe. Both Bishop Ignatius and Bishop Jonathan are keen to encourage these links and desire that they are mutually helpful, exchanging news and praying for each other.

Firstly, we would ask you to complete the enclosed form and return it to the Link Team, giving us a little bit of information about your parish. Two things to ensure at this stage are:

- that your church fully supports this venture. That is why we have asked for signatures from you and your PCC secretary to ensure it has been discussed and agreed by you PCC.
- that you have one person (other than the Incumbent/Priest in Charge) designated as Link Co-ordinator and committed to that role. You could of course set up a small committee, but for our purposes we would appreciate one named person.

Please return that to us as soon as possible and we will work with Bishop Ignatius to decide on the most appropriate link.

HOW IT WILL WORK

INFORMATION

Once the link is decided we will try to provide as much information as possible about your link parish/project and a named person for you to communicate with there. Most people in Zimbabwe speak good English (it is still the language for official communications and education), although slightly less so in the rural areas.

ON-GOING COMMUNICATION

You will appreciate that communications with Zimbabwe are not always easy. Post, particularly in rural areas is not always reliable. Some parishes may have access to email which makes life simple. Many people have mobiles but phoning someone you don't really know isn't very easy or a cheap option for either end. Mobiles do though allow you to exchange text messages and that can keep communications open. It might be possible to forward messages via the Diocesan office in Gweru. We would suggest as a minimum you exchange communications with your link at least three times per year - and are prepared to be patient if it isn't easy.

PRAYER

However, Christians have an amazing communication link, which no technology can match. Our prayers can release God's power to work in situations of which we know little. The Holy Spirit can get through when printed or spoken words can't. Prayer is a central part of the Link and is a two-way thing. We would ask you to commit to making prayer for Zimbabwe a regular feature of your intercessions. This can be fed by the information you get from your link, the Croydon Area Zimbabwe prayer calendar and occasional Zimbabwe News which is

circulated. If direct information is lacking there is always plenty of general information on the state of the country to be found on the internet. And don't be afraid to ask your brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe to pray for your parish needs. They may be materially less well off than us, but they are undoubtedly richer in faith.

GIVING

The idea of the Link is that it is a two-way thing and it is not mainly about giving. Indeed, we recognise some of our parishes are not in a position to give. If that is your situation and you become aware of a financial need your link parish has then do approach the Link Committee as there may be the possibility of making some money available from the Croydon Zimbabwe Link Fund. However, clearly the church in Zimbabwe has many needs and you may well decide you would like to raise money for your link parish. Either way there are strict rules for the giving of money which have been agreed by Bishop Ignatius and the Croydon Link Team and will need paperwork to support it:

- **Any requests for funds from Zimbabwe must first be vetted by Bishop Ignatius.** This is to ensure that there is no unfairness, with some parishes receiving far more than others. In some situations we may suggest that rather than just giving to your link parish, you give a proportion for that specific need (eg: a building project, school books) and a proportion to be disbursed for similar projects through the diocese as a whole.
- **Any monies given must go through the Diocesan finances both here and in Central Zimbabwe and need supporting paperwork.** The reason for this is firstly because the transfer charges are proportionally much lower when money is given in larger chunks and secondly to ensure that no gifts are misused. Please do talk with the Link team if you have any questions or concerns.

VISITS

These are a wonderful way to ensure the link is effective as real relationships are built and you experience first hand the setting and culture. Watch out for information on any group trips going from Croydon. Again visits can be a two way thing, and your parish might consider sponsoring someone from your link parish or project to come over here. If you have thoughts about doing this please speak first to our Link Team.

FINALLY

To have a direct link with a parish or project in Zimbabwe can be very rewarding as it lifts our eyes to recognise we are part of a worldwide church. Please don't get disheartened if the communications do not work easily.

Do come back to us if you have any questions or comments

With best wishes

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