

Makeni Ecumenical Centre Newsletter, December 2019

Christmas Holidays

It is hard to believe that the year has almost ended. The children have written their final exams and on the 6th of December they went home for the Christmas holidays.

In accordance with the wishes of our local Department of Social Welfare, it is good for the children to reconnect with their home environment, however humble it may be. Where the home is thought to be unsafe, children go to stay with a relative. Some will go to rural areas, where they have relatives, but most will go to urban compounds, which can be quite a challenge.

Wherever they go it will be very different from the strict regime of an institution. Holidays mean that they do not have to get up at 5 in the morning to tidy their beds, eat their breakfast and get ready for school. But in holidays it can also mean that perhaps they will have no bed of their own or no breakfast.

When children return after holidays, they are often a bit thinner and some will bring with them a bag full of dirty laundry which they were unable to wash because they had no water or no soap powder. Even in the urban compound they would have had to walk a distance to get water from a communal pump. When they return, they are appreciative of the electricity and water that they have at the Centre, even if the electricity is only occasional, as it is at the moment.

The School Bus

In May we received a school bus as a gift from the Busy Lizzies, Friends of Flanders and it has proved a tremendous advantage. Every day it is filled to capacity by MEC school children, but the St Nicholas children who live within the confines of MEC had so far never been able to enjoy a ride on the bus. At last the opportunity came, when they when they went home for school holidays. Very exciting!



The School

The School has done very well this year. Firstly, the headmaster Mr Longwani, has added a touch of stability and improved discipline in the school in general.

No teachers left our employment during 2019, despite the temptation of better pay at other schools. Our school is registered as a government examination centre, which is quite an achievement. To qualify as an examination centre it is necessary to have three laboratories and also computer facilities.

Many schools in the vicinity now use our school for writing their grade 7, 9 and 12 examinations. The enrolment of pupils has also increased, possibly because of the school bus, and also because of a new sense of stability in our teacher population.

In the new year we will be able to give the exact figures of pupil enrolment and the pass rate in the national examinations.

Schoolwork

This year we had five children from St Nicholas who were writing national government examinations.

In Grade 7 we had Esther Njonvu, Pexilida Hanyimba and Anna Tembo; in Grade 9 Basil Tembo and in Grade 12 Adam Lengwe.



We have spoken to the children often about the importance of education and we remind them constantly of how fortunate they are to have sponsors for their education and a safe environment to study, work and play.

We hope and pray that the school holidays will be a time to help reinforce these concepts in their minds and that they will return to us ready to work and study seriously in the new year.

Planting

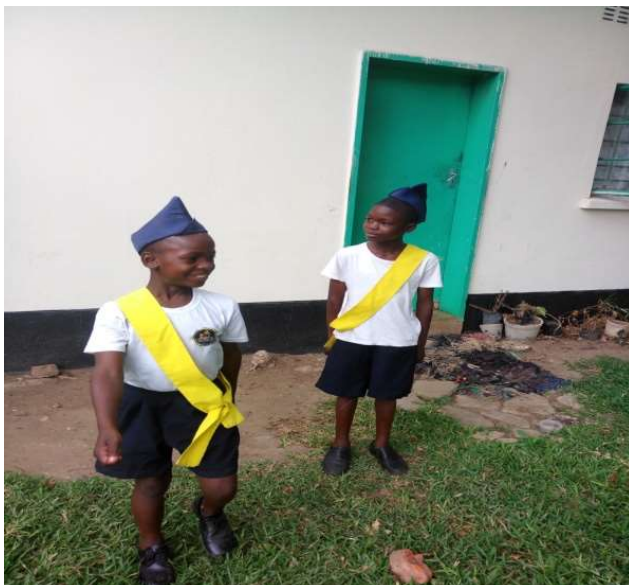
Before leaving for the holidays the children prepared a field and planted maize seed. We hope and pray for adequate rains to maintain the plants, which will be part of the food supply for the St Nicholas Orphanage.

Generator

Friends of Flanders and Archbishop Shane Jantzen of Victoria, Canada are sharing the cost of a very large Generator for MEC. This will greatly assist our work, since for almost 2 months we have had no electricity for up to 18 hours a day. The power is usually available for just 6 hours, from midnight to 6 am — most unsatisfactory for productivity! We are praying most earnestly for a good rainy season to replenish our lakes, dams, rivers and underground water supplies. The current drought may be the worst for twenty or more years. This has brought the [Victoria Falls](#) into the news recently, and the country's reliance on hydro-electric power has been hit by low water levels here and at the [Kariba Dam](#) amongst other places.

Boys' and Girls' Brigades

On the 25th August the boys had a renewing of the boys' brigade vows, while the girls had theirs on the 29th September. In attendance were many dignitaries of the girls' and boys' brigade and brass bands from local neighbouring churches. At both boys' and girls' renewal there were St Nicholas children participating in the ceremonies.



Friends of Makeni

We are most grateful to Friends of Makeni who covered the cost of repairing the Computer Laboratory after a disastrous fire in the poultry section also caused major damage to the laboratory. Happily, with the donation we were able to restore the laboratory to its former good state.



Friends of Makeni also generously donated as they have done in past years to general running expenses of St Nicholas Orphanage.



Pitsford Junior School shoe and clothing donations

Thank you once again to Pitsford Junior School in Northamptonshire, and Head of Juniors, Mrs Julia Willmott! The school's second donation of shoes and clothes arrived safely in Lusaka at the beginning of December. Julia drove the items to Folkestone, where charity [Operation Sunshine](#) received the items and kindly allowed them to come in their container, for which we are most grateful. Below are pictures of the delighted children trying on the shoes.



Pearl Foundation support

Thirty-nine vulnerable children living with their parents and guardians in the compounds and villages benefited from the Pearl Foundation donation to our Home-based Children School Support scheme. Two of the beneficiaries are Mirriam Lubilo, on the left, who has just written Grade 12, and Esther Mwangalala, who has written Grade 9 Examinations.



Lestina Nkhuwa also benefited from Tertiary sponsorship from Pearl Foundation and graduated with a Certificate in Hospitality.



Lestina and Mrs Catherine Oreta, who is the in charge of Home-based Care, at graduation

Pearl Foundation's support is seen in many other ways. The foundation donated the cost of a house for Shadreck Mudenda, a severely disabled former pupil who could not continue with his education because he was unable to cope with the requirements at the school.

There was also weekly fruit for St Nicholas Orphanage, which has been a welcome addition to the children's diet every Saturday.

Donations were received towards children's birthday presents at the orphanage, bringing joy and expectation to every child.

The children were also helped to attend a concert at Easter at Miracle Life Church. This is a colourful annual event and the children always look forward to it.

Visitors

Mr Reinhold Tournicourt came to visit at the beginning of October 2019, for one week. The temperature was in the mid-30s and we had no electricity, so it was fortunate for him that it was a short visit! Nevertheless, Mr Tournicourt was very welcome, and he managed to accomplish what he came to do without complaining about the weather.

Our only disappointment was that Mrs Mieke Claus was unable to come with him as planned. Mrs Claus was in hospital recovering from a bad fall. We wish her a speedy recovery and every success with the Christmas sale of work which, we heard, she continued to organize from her sick bed! The sale is in aid of the work of Makeni Ecumenical Centre and St Nicholas Orphanage.

Mr Sandy Adam from Scotland is a regular welcome visitor. He came for three months and worked in the MEC Main Office allowing hard-working Miss Tina Nkhata to go on Leave. We are most grateful for his contribution to our work.

Mrs Joke Ruiters from Friends of Makeni in Holland came in February and was with us for five weeks. Joke is also a regular visitor who is much loved by the St Nicholas Children. She spends her time playing with the little ones, giving them time and attention and using her sewing machine to make and mend the children's clothes.

Our heartfelt thanks!

To all of our faithful donors who every year send us donations for general use at St Nicholas Orphanage and Makeni Ecumenical Centre, including:

- **Klooster Church in the Hague, Holland**
- **Little St Mary's Church, Cambridge UK**
- **Iffley Church, Oxford, UK**
- **St John the Baptist, Piddington UK**
- **Friends of Makeni in Holland and Belgium**
- **George and Moonyeen Muller in RSA and**
- **Mr and Mrs Naik and friends in Lusaka.**

Finally, may we thank you most sincerely for your untiring support for our work among the less fortunate people of Zambia. Sometimes it seems unending, but we are reminded of the Bible which says, "you will always have the poor with you," so we just have to keep on working.

The Staff of Makeni Centre and the Children of St Nicholas Orphanage wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and may the new year bring you good health, peace and happiness.

Wenda E. Dil
Executive Secretary

Bishop Andrew Mukuyamba
Managing Director