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Dear Friends & Family

“This year happens to contain an important milestone concerning the Peacock Family. Our father, George Donald Peacock was born 100 years ago on 14th December 1920. Space does not permit me to write much about him, but suffice it to say he was one of five children and grew up in southern England at Henley on Thames. During the Second World War (1939-45) he joined the air force, at the end of the war he met and fell in love with our mother Irene Patricia Keegan. They married that year and had five children. He had a successful career in the airline business, co-founding an airline. He died of a heart attack while home with his wife on 27th March 2000, at the age of 79. We all remember him with great fondness, as a loving man, loving his church of adoption, which was the Catholic Church, loving his family and loving those around him.”

When I last wrote a newsletter in June 2020 we were just enjoying the easing of the Covid 19 restrictions, with the churches reopening, even if there were still some restrictions about the numbers that are allowed to gather together, for example. Thank God since that time there have been very few new cases of the disease in this country, with current figures showing that less than 9,000 have been infected, with around 300 deaths. Meanwhile, there is a lot of economic hardship due to the job losses that the lockdown has caused. However, some restrictions have been eased further and some businesses have resumed trading.

Sadly the number of deaths in our parish have gone up since the lockdown started, with 35 registered deaths this year. In fact, in the same space of time the number of deaths has exceeded the number of baptisms. None of the deaths have been caused by Covid 19 but some have been influenced by the shutdown. The influences include increased levels of malnutrition and poorer access to medical supplies, partly due to the enforced reduction of public transport and partly due to job losses, meaning some cannot afford the medication that they were buying. Many medicines are available free, but quite often the free medication is not available.

Meanwhile, thanks to some kind donors, we are still buying in extra supplies of grain, mainly maize, sorghum and finger millet. These we distribute to the most needy that live in our mission area. Here one ton of grain costs about \$200 US dollars (Picture No. 1).

Some of the events of the last six months at our mission have been non-events, due to the lockdown. The date for our annual Corpus Christi procession, scheduled for 14th June, came and went without one parishioner even moving an inch, while our annual parish feast in June to celebrate the birthday of St. John the Baptist also passed off without as much as one parishioner being present.

On a more positive note two of the seminarians of the diocese, Ian Muenda and Asani Nyendwa were ordained to become deacons on 26th September at the cathedral in Hwange. Ian comes originally from one of our outstations, St. Albert, Shashachunda. Hopefully they will be ordained priests early in 2021. Earlier this month we happened to have at the mission several more of our sons and daughters who are preparing to become priests and sisters. In the attached photo (No.2) we see, left to right Br Tarcisius Munkombwe, Br Dava Mpala, myself, Sr. Teresa Shoko and Kelvin Munkuli. All of these are from our parish, except for Br Dava. The brothers belong to the Capuchin Order and Sr Teresa is becoming a Franciscan of the 'FMDM' congregation.

The schools in Zimbabwe, like so many other countries around the world, were shut down during March due to the lockdown, but when they were supposed to reopen at the end of September they faced a strike of the teachers, who were looking for a higher pay. By the end of November the government and teachers' unions, came to an interim agreement, so since then there have been some lessons and the form 4 students and Grade 7 primary students are writing exams as I write this. In all this surely it is the children who suffer the most. The unions may opt to go back on strike in January 2021, but I hope and pray an agreement can be made since surely it is time to take pity on the children. They have all missed school for most of this year and what future will they face if they start next year missing school again?

In my last newsletter I mentioned that we were blessed earlier this year to get a new 1-ton pick up truck. Later in the year we were blessed by God with yet another new arrival, this time a 7-ton truck. On the 8th August our 'new' Nissan UD 70 arrived at the mission (No. 3), thanks to the kind donation of a private sponsor in England. We bought this vehicle from South Africa earlier in the year. The vehicle is about 8 years old, but the rear body was brand new. We found the vehicle to be in very good condition, thanks to our agent in South Africa making sure he got a good buy. He is an old acquaintance that has got vehicles several times for our acquaintances and has proved very competent and honest over the years. It took several months of negotiations to get it through the

border, with the Covid 19 restrictions delaying the whole process very much. Already we have made much use of that vehicle.

Thank God this new rainy season, which usually runs from November until March, has got off to a good start. The experts reckon we will have a good rainy season. The downside is that we only get good rains on average about every six years, due to the 'El Niño' effect. I am attaching a couple of pictures of our new school dam at Katete, which is now spilling (No. 4). It is currently our biggest dam, with the spillway rising 6,0m above the base and the width is about 90 metres. The tailback of the lake that has been formed is about one kilometre. It took three years to build and there are still some touches to be done.

Meanwhile, we have recently started on another new dam, about 10 Km beyond Katete. We had a small blessing ceremony on 1st September of the start of the new dam. It is at Lubanda, which used to be one of our outstations, but is now under an adjacent mission. It will be a fairly big dam, about five metres to the top of the spillway and about 80 metres wide. At present the people there suffer very much from a lack of water (No. 5). It is a place that is not suitable for drilling boreholes, due to the soil conditions. Thank God we still have donors in Ireland helping us, "Zimbabwe Rural Development Trust", although they are struggling these days due to the very strict lockdown conditions in their country.

Still on the subject of building we are continuing with the building of the new hospital at Tshongokwe. After completing the children's (paediatric) ward we are now busy building a nurse's semi-detached cottage, for two nurses.

One of our projects got completed since I sent my last newsletter. It is a triple classroom block, situated at Nechishala Secondary School in Mashala, just 17 Km from Hwange. I mentioned in my last newsletter that it was nearing completion at the time, and was sponsored by an elderly priest friend of mine, Fr Alexander Alapont, and his collaborators in the Valencia region of Spain. Since I last wrote he has become more frail and has now been transferred to a nursing home. Meanwhile, at the same school another team of our builders have started building a low cost hostel for girl lodgers. It will house about 80 girls. Already it is at roof level (No. 6). This building is being assisted by a group of private donors from Canada, who collaborate with an NGO, World Vision.

Speaking of schools we have been recently building a new teachers' cottage at Neshaya Secondary school, near our mission (No. 7). This has been partially sponsored by a German NGO and partly from a private donor. It will house four teachers and will have a flushing toilet, a first for the school. This school was first established about 35 years ago, but until now the only toilets for both pupils and staff were the dry 'squat' toilets. Going back to Katete, another private donor from Ireland is still busy sponsoring the development of the new secondary school there, and just this month the carpenters erected to roof of the teacher's' cottage (No. 8). Right next to it is the new double classroom block, which was recently completed and is already in use (No. 9).

On the subject of projects, we are about to commence building a new irrigation scheme. At the bottom of our mission property we have been allocated a field of four acres, which we are about to fence. I mentioned in previous letters that we had drilled a new borehole and installed a solar powered water pump to pump water to a 10,000 litre storage tank. This now supplies the whole mission with water. This has been running well and the donor who helped us with the whole project has kindly helped again, with this extension of the project. To cope with the increased demand for water we will upgrade the pump from one HP to around three HP. In turn this will entail adding nine more solar panels to the six that are already installed. In addition a 63,000 Litre reservoir will be built, which will supply a drip irrigation water system. We plan to use about one quarter of the land for the mission needs and the rest will be shared out to assist those living nearby. The project should have got under way a few months ago, but we had great difficulty getting the fence. The only factory where we get the fence is in South Africa but until recently their machine has been broken down. In the 'Third World' we are used to being patient.

Finally, on 17th October our bishop blessed a new priest retreat master's house that we had constructed for the FMDM sisters at their novitiate convent in Victoria Falls. See picture No. 10 for 'all smiles'! Picture No. 11 shows the building itself. May God bless all our donors, both the known ones and the unknown ones, for all their kindness.

Fr Tim Peacock

Thank you to all those who so kindly support Children and Families in Need in Zimbabwe (CFNZ), the charity I head up to support Fr Tim running the Mission and outreach work. As you know, we 4 trustees claim no expenses, so only 0.5% of donations goes to pay bank and postage, Tim uses the rest to support many initiatives. If you want to know more about the charity, or support it financially, please email me. Sue, Fr Tim's sister (lead trustee) childrenfamiliesinzimbabwe@gmail.com or frtimnewsletter@gmail.com

Wishing you all a very happy blessed Christmas and 2021, good health and peace. Sue