

# ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS (ZIMBABWE)

**NOT SUCH A MERRY CHRISTMAS FOR SOME:** In the past, Christmas Eve would have resonated with laughter and music followed by food and presents. Nowadays sadly, many Zimbabwean families have yet to experience the spirit of Christmas as most of us know it – without hardship or stress. Year after year, they have suffered from a vindictive, corrupt



government and watched in dismay how some politicians and their privileged families enjoyed the full benefits of independence. I doubt this small band of shameless people care about what Christmas was like for many of their countrymen living in high density suburbs or rural parts. They started the New Year as they ended the old- stressed, penniless and frustrated, wondering if their lives would ever change for the better. Whilst visiting a rural area in Mt Darwin, artist Godwin chanced upon Jocelyn (5) making the best of things whilst sister Jane (12) ironed clothes. Both children are orphans and Christmas appears to have passed them by.

**Artpeace**, however, benefited from a surge in sales both at the Southwark Cathedral Shop and from the display in St Andrew's Gateway where Nativity sets proved very popular. The splendid sum of £1200 including donations was raised in December which made all the difference to our friends' festive celebrations. Sales were also boosted by Dean Andrew Nunn's usual quick reaction via his blog or Twitter a/c (see below) to the occasional moving news or photo (example right). Andrew is a great communicator and enjoys well over two thousand Twitter followers!



**Andrew Nunn** @deansouthwark 18 Dec 2015. Sad picture from ArtPeace in Zimbabwe. A storm ruined Fortune's house. Manuel stands there bemused. Pray for them. [pic.twitter.com/2jAE5xV07v](https://pic.twitter.com/2jAE5xV07v)



**Impact:** Customers occasionally request artists' details and are moved by their plight. Their purchases are often admired by friends. I received a nice email before Christmas which I thought to share vis: 'Dear John. Thanks for sending the latest article and all the other info' you do so regularly. I just thought you might like to know the reaction of my four year old granddaughter to our nativity set (Mary and Joseph) recently purchased from the Cathedral. She is not in a church going family but happens to be playing Mary in her pre-school nativity. She looked at the carving of Mary and Joseph and realised with no prompting that it was Mary and the baby Jesus...she did wonder if the other figure was a shepherd but then quickly realised it must be Joseph. The carving has been talked about much by her with us which has been lovely and related to her pre-school play. You never know the impact something so beautiful yet simple has!' H. I have a few Nativity sets left should anyone be interested although they may be in different styles.



**Drought:** Whilst floods have devastated the UK, in comparison, Zimbabwe has suffered from a long severe drought owing to the El Niño weather pattern. The country teeters on the brink of a socio-economic and political crisis. Many crops suffer from moisture stress. Artpeace are feeling



the heat in more ways than one as temperatures hit a blistering 40°C. Photos: Top left – a gaunt looking Peter Kananji balances in a tree, reduced to eating wild fruits as money is so tight. Right - artist Alfred looks despairingly at his stunted crop of maize - the staple food for his family.



**Nearer to God?** Artist Lovemore James said: ‘On Sunday I was surprised to come across this area (photo left) sectioned off by material in the middle of a field. On asking why, I was told it is a church without a roof as some groups of Christians cannot afford proper buildings. These people feel because the rains are not falling and plants are perishing that it is time to pray out in the fields where God might hear their prayers.’

**Back to school:** Brother and sister Alice and Jonah (right) are two of the five orphans who enjoy an education thanks to support

from St Andrew’s and friends. They love every aspect of school! Many are not so fortunate and already this term, some disappointed children were sent home from school in tears owing to unpaid fees.



They appreciate our help knowing the effect on their future in terms of finding a job and being able to help their families.

**Sense of humour:** Despite the constant hardship, talented artist Costa Guru (left) can still laugh. He excels in carving elephants and birds. His cute little green



owl is awaiting a courier to the UK but should have no problem finding a buyer!

**Outlook:** Official reports indicate that the poorest households will remain predominantly in crisis - the food situation will largely depend on the performance of the rainfall season and levels of humanitarian assistance. Our support will continue to be a lifeline and morale booster. **JS**