

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

MORE ON DOORKINS! The many cat lovers in our congregation may have appreciated my newsletter article written last June about Doorkins, Southwark Cathedral's splendid cat. Indeed, a book has since been written about her and she has featured in this excerpt from Dean Andrew Nunn's recent blog - Living God, which I thought to share with you. Andrew writes:

A SAFE CHURCH: I couldn't be in the Synod Chamber for the start of today's business, as much as I wanted to be. In fact, I was on the 'Big Breakfast' show on 'Premier Radio' with Lisa Gutwein, a member of the congregation at Southwark Cathedral and also the author of the recently published book 'Doorkins the Cathedral Cat'. The interview had been in the diary for a long time and we were keen to tell the story of Doorkins, so that was why I was there. It may sound very trivial compared with the importance of the debate that was going on just down the road, on Safeguarding in the church and I suppose in reality it is. But there is a deeper message to Doorkins than just the story of a cute tabby cat. Doorkins arrived at the Cathedral doors in 2008. She was a stray who somehow found her way into the churchyard. The vergers noticed her there each morning and after a while put out food. Then they put the food inside, in the warm and very cautiously she made her way across the threshold into the building. And she decided it was safe to stay. Since then she has become a feature of our life and a much-loved part of the Southwark Cathedral family. She is still a bit wild and can be grumpy and challenging but can also be loving - not so different from a lot of people who come to church! We don't know her story or why she was on the streets - and, of course, we never will. She was God's little gift to us.



Her story is a parable of what a safe church should be, simply that, safe, whoever you are. Unfortunately, all the incidents of abuse that are now known about and those yet to be disclosed happened in or around churches perpetrated by people, clergy and laity, who used their power to prey on others, children, vulnerable adults, of whom they took advantage. The safe church became the unsafe environment. We all need a safe space, we can all be vulnerable when all of a sudden there is a power imbalance and the church should and must be safe. Getting there will take a lot of doing and rebuilding trust will take a long time. The debate in Synod today was just another stage on the journey - but as we were clearly told, there has to be a change of culture and that change will involve how each of us thinks and speaks and acts. We have to change.



PROGRESS! The Cathedral shop's new website will soon feature online sales of all Doorkins' merchandise; calendars, mugs, books and mouse mats etc. I have been asked to provide cats from our artists to be sold under the Doorkins' 'brand'. Herbert (left), who attends his local Methodist Church, was



first off the mark and his efforts should arrive in April. He excels at finding seams of rare stone like Red Jasper - marvel at the colour of his friend Chengetai's stunning 'Angry Tortoise' above! Unfortunately, this stone is so hard that artists need expensive power tools to create their magic.

THE DROUGHT has ended but according to artist Christine Ndoro not before a new menace, the deadly army worm, devastated her family's crop in Buhera (below extreme left). Not only that but



prolonged fierce suns burned their field (left). Christine had to replant early January and used the dead crop to mulch her sweet potato mounds. In the UK, we take so much for granted and simply pop into a local supermarket for food but our friends do not have this luxury and precious little money: a situation worsened by very poor sculpture sales last month as the cold weather had a dire effect on Cathedral shop visitor numbers. **So the artists go without and some rest at home to conserve energy trying to ignore the pangs of hunger.** However there is some good news as many fields have survived and most artists can

expect a good harvest - so essential to their families welfare. See cheerful photos (left) of Ignatious and Shingi. It was heartening to learn that Isabel (below right) one of several children whose education has been supported by members of the congregation, gained two 'A' level



passes: a great effort considering she shares text books without electricity at night to study 😊.

ROLLER COASTER: Life continues to prove a roller coaster for most poor Zimbabweans now hit by the death of Morgan Tsvangirai (65), a huge blow to the MDC, the main opposition party. It comes only months before the first election is due to be held since the end of Robert Mugabe's long reign. MT was one of the giants of the long struggle to bring democracy to Zimbabwe and he will be remembered for his courage, humility, humour and relentless determination. The dilemma is now to find someone who will fill that central essential role. **Johnston Simpson**