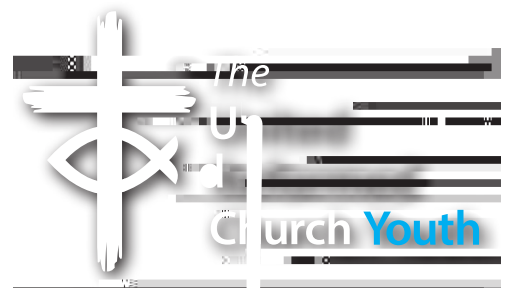


#connect2: Zimbabwe

Commitment
for **Life**



Welcome to URC Youth mission magazine from the United Reformed Church (URC) Children's and Youth Work, produced in collaboration with URC Commitment for Life which, in turn, partners with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

#Connect2 is for the 11 to 14 age range. It emphasises the increasing focus on our inter-connected world as we aim to build and explore the relationship between each of the Commitment for Life regions, the people who live there, and ourselves as a Church and as individuals. Young people may choose to use this material independently, or leaders may use it in their planning. Greta Global is the mascot of Commitment for Life, and each year will invite children aged between 5 and 10 to 'Go with Greta' to one of the regions that Commitment for Life supports through Christian Aid. The material in 'Go with Greta' is designed for leaders to use in planning their sessions.

The two regions we have visited so far are Central America (which includes Nicaragua) and Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, though since starting this resource Commitment for Life no longer directly supports Central America. This year we visit the Republic of Zimbabwe and this will be followed by one further resource all about Bangladesh next year.

Our part in mission involves learning more about the problems facing the poorest people in our world. by listening to the storirobly onrld0 ()TJ 0 (C Y)8 [(l)19 (is .(if)21 (e wn)14 (g m)11 (th)11 (e proble inueJ 0ork, pdre6.1pa



‘ This God made us in all our diversity from one original person, allowing each culture to have its own time to develop, giving each its own place to live and thrive in its distinct ways. ’ (GW) Acts 17:26

Unlike the island of Great Britain, Zimbabwe (officially called The Republic of Zimbabwe) is a land-locked country (it has no coastline)



Some of the most famous landmarks in Zimbabwe are the 'Balancing Rocks'.



'Balancing rocks' is an activity that some people use to aid their mental wellbeing in the UK. Can you try and balance pebbles into a structure that doesn't look as though it should stay upright?

Zimbabwe used to be called Southern Rhodesia (and later Rhodesia) and was a British colony ruled by a minority white government in which the indigenous black African people were treated as though they were less important than white people. You can read about colonisation and its effects here: [link](#)

Cecil John Rhodes was one of the British imperialists who colonised the area now called Zimbabwe and there is a lot of controversy about him. There is a statue of him outside one of the Oxford University colleges and there has been a campaign to have it removed. This news report from CMN will explain a little about why: [link](#) What is your opinion? He donated a lot of money to the university – is it right that they have a statue of him there?

Rhodesia declared independence from the UK in 1974 – but the country was still ruled by a white minority government which was not internationally recognised. It finally gained independence from white minority rule in 1980 after a civil war that cost 30,000 lives, and renamed itself Zimbabwe. The name is derived from the Shona phrase "Dzimba dza mabwe", which means "great houses of stone". It refers to the stone structures of Great Zimbabwe or Dzimbahwe, which were included in the World Heritage List in 1986.

Robert Mugabe was elected President and he ruled with an increasingly iron fist for 30 years until he was forced out of power following a coup in 2017.

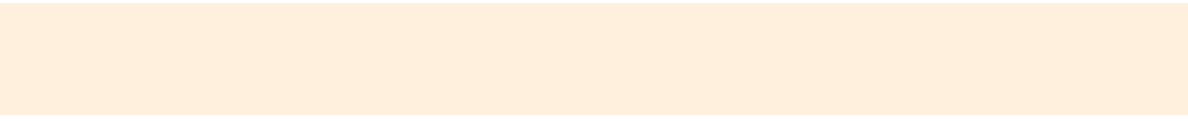
The Zimbabwe flag includes a black stripe that represents the ethnic majority, red for the blood shed during liberation, green for agriculture, yellow for mineral wealth and white for peace and progress. There is also a red star for socialism and a depiction of the Zimbabwe bird that appeared on carvings in Great Zimbabwe.

About 50% of the population in the country profess to be Syncretics (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs), 25% are Christians and the rest follow indigenous beliefs. There is no official state religion (such as the Church of England).




Zimbabwe is a very 'young' country – with nearly 50% of the population being under 20 years old. Life expectancy is much lower than in Great Britain, with men living until 62 and women living until 65 (on average).




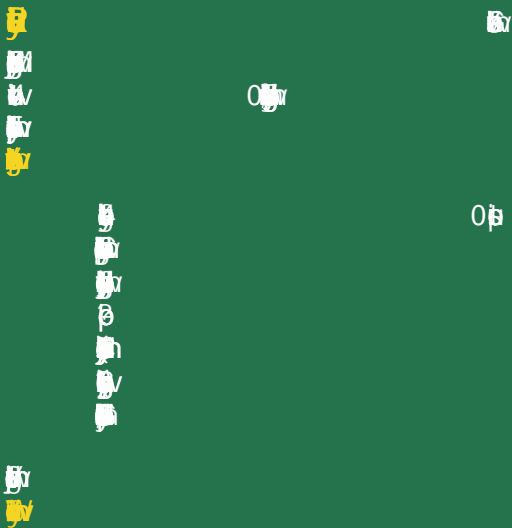




Modern Zimbabwean music is often influenced by traditional music styles and instruments and can be used to challenge society and raise awareness of issues. Listen to some of the music by Jah Prayzah, currently very popular on the Zimbabwe pop music scene, and by Oliver Mtukudzi, who performs internationally.

Traditional music also influences church music in Zimbabwe, both Catholic and Protestant. A style of gospel music is popular and one of the best known singers/bands is Machanic Manyeruke and the Puritans. One of their songs, 'Jesus is risen', can be heard here: 

In the UK, one of the songs we might hear in church settings is 'Jesu Tawa Pano' (Jesus, we are here), which was written by Zimbabwean Patrick Matsikenyiri. Try singing it together, maybe with a drum accompaniment.  The words are 'Jesu, tawa pano' (x3) 'Tawa pano, mu zita renyu.'





6

Traditional crafts in Zimbabwe include beadwork, weaving of baskets and sleeping mats out of dried grasses, stone sculpture, wood carving, pottery and wall painting (painting designs onto the outside walls of the house using fingers to create traditional patterns, with earth pigments for colouring). Several of the craftsmen that create the Shona stone sculptures are known internationally. The carvings are made in a variety of materials, from soapstone to the highly esteemed Zimbabwean Verdite, a semi precious stone over 3,500 million years old.

Look online at some of the designs of Zimbabwean pottery. Use air-dry clay to create a pot and decorate it in a typical Zimbabwean style.

7

 is a game similar to football but played one-on-one, each player only making contact with the ball once in each turn. Each player has a goal area and the ball starts with the person who wins the toss of a coin kicking the ball from their goal area. Wherever the ball lands, that is where their opponent can kick from. Head or chest can be used to defend the goal, though this is instead of a kick. The ball must not be touched with a hand. The first to reach three goals wins.

Play  This is a game for two players, each having twelve counters. Take it in turns to place a counter on the board (pictured right) at the intersection of at least two lines. The aim is to get three of your counters in a row.



‘ Defend weak people and orphans. Protect the rights of the oppressed and the poor.





of people in Zimbabwe work in agriculture, which is severely affected by climate change, and this leads to food insecurity. Lack of water affects sanitation and the droughts and floods increase the spread of water-borne diseases such as cholera. Christian Aid believes that climate change is a social justice issue, as the communities that are being impacted first and worst are the countries that have contributed the least to cause the issues. Every child in Zimbabwe (43% of the population or 6.6 million children under 18) is exposed to at least one climate/environmental hazard and at risk of climate change impacts such as flooding, drought, heatwaves, cyclones, and air pollution, yet they are the least responsible.



‘ Love is patient, love is kind, love isn’t jealous, it doesn’t sing its own praises, it isn’t arrogant or rude. ’ (GW) 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

The URC’s Commitment for Life programme works in partnership with Christian Aid, to support our global neighbours around the world. Christian Aid works with local partner organisations in Zimbabwe, which work to tackle the root causes of poverty within local communities. BRACKT is a Christian Aid partner which has worked alongside the community in Mutoko, a small town in the East of Zimbabwe.

 (left) is a mother of three from Nhire village, Mutoko. Netsai and her husband used to make a living from farming and brick moulding, but life was tough, as unpredictable weather patterns impacted their farming. Christian Aid’s partner project BRACKT offered her vocational training to become a welder. “I believe in equal delegation of duties for men and women and my husband is in full support of my choice of occupation. The whole family is really happy with the extra income and my children are also interested in taking up the business when they finish school.” Netsai has now set up a business called ‘Star Welding’, alongside other training graduates.

 (right) lives with her two children, her parents and her sisters in Njani village, Mutoko. The family makes a living from farming, and training from BRACKT has equipped





(Snatch) is not exactly a game about showing love, but is a popular game in Zimbabwe. Each player needs to bring in a low-value item which they are happy to lose, but which someone else might like (e.g. packets of sweets). They should hold it loosely in their hand. Then chase each other around the room, trying to snatch whatever is in someone else's hand without any other physical contact. When the whistle blows, players get to keep whatever they have "snatched". If there is an imbalance, where some people have a lot and some have nothing, players could decide to show a bit of love and share things out.



Listen to this Zimbabwean folk tale: 

Think about what this story is about. There is a verse in the Bible which says, "Don't forget to welcome outsiders. By doing that, some people have welcomed angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2) (NIRV). Why not create your own folk tale on a similar theme and find a way of sharing it with others – stop motion animation, graphic story, drama etc.



A word which is often used in Zimbabwe is Ubuntu, which means, 'A person is only a person through other people'. Ubuntu is the concept that we each can act amongst others to show love and compassion, and we all rely on that from others to live. Former South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu explains it this way:

"It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobuntu'; 'Hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu'. Then you are generous, you are hospitable, and you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other persons. It is not I think therefore I am. It says rather: I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share. A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are."

