

'Gardens of Life'. USPГ Sermon for Harvest 2021.

Gospel reading: Matthew 6: 25 – 33

Slide 1 – Opening Slide



Slide 2. Title slide.

'Strive first for the kingdom of God^l and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' – from Matthew 6: 33.

Introduce yourself and your relationship to USPГ.

USPГ is an Anglican Mission agency supporting churches around the world in their mission to bring fullness of life to the communities they serve. This year for Harvest, USPГ is encouraging us to focus our prayers and giving on 'Gardens of Life' through the work of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe.

Slide 3. Map of Africa showing location of Zimbabwe.



Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in south east Africa. It is home to over 15 million people with 16 official languages. Recent history in Zimbabwe has been dominated by Robert Mugabe who was president from 1980 until his resignation in 2017. Under Mugabe's regime the state security controlled the country and was responsible for widespread human rights violations. Zimbabwe has been in economic decline since the 1990s, experiencing

several crashes and high inflation; and has also been suffering the devastating effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemics.

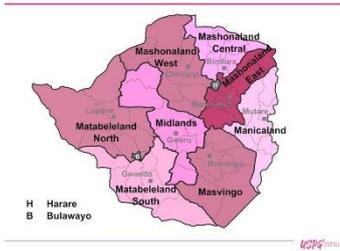
Slide 4.



USPГ's partner The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe is part of the Anglican Church of Central Africa, which was inaugurated in 1955. The province covers four countries: Botswana, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. USPГ's connection with this part of the continent of Africa goes way back to 1861, when Bishop Charles Mackenzie, who founded UMCA (the Universities Mission to Central Africa – which became a part of USPГ) arrived in Malawi with David Livingstone. USPГ's relationship with the Anglican Church in

Zimbabwe is deep and well cultivated – like the roots of the produce in the Gardens of Life!

Slide 5. Map of Zimbabwe.



The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe today seeks to live out a holistic mission: which is both evangelistic and strives for social change. At the moment Zimbabwe is facing severe food insecurity. Millions of people are requiring humanitarian assistance due to the effects of climate change, deteriorating social and economic conditions, and the effects of the Covid – 19 pandemic. The combination of these factors has left people struggling to put food on the table and has exacerbated food insecurity in the country.

Slide 6. Picture of a man with a chicken



The Church is responding to these needs particularly with some of the most marginalised people in the community who are living with HIV and Aids. While Zimbabwe is on the way to reducing HIV and AIDS, many of those who live with HIV still face stigma around disclosing their status. To support local people, the Anglican Church of Zimbabwe’s Stigma Reduction Programme trains church leaders on issues of HIV and has created wellness groups that provide a network for people living with HIV and AIDS.

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Food insecurity brings additional negative effects for people living with HIV and AIDS as good nutrition is a key factor in adherence to Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy. Without this people may face an increase in the rate of progression to AIDS and higher levels of stigma and discrimination. So as well as emotional support, the Anglican Church’s wellness groups offer access to food gardens – ‘Gardens of Life’ - to improve nutrition and help with developing sustainable livelihoods. 848 people living with HIV are now participating in the wellness groups, which have been transformational for those in the programme.

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Wellness gardens – ‘Gardens of Life’ - have been beneficial in mitigating the effects of climate change. The group members are learning organic planting methods, keeping the soil fertile, producing healthier crops, even on small pieces of land. Training in ‘Farming God’s way’ is integral to the project, which is

established in six locations in the Diocese of Central Zimbabwe and the Diocese of Masvingo. Pictured here is the 'Harbern Green House'.

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After receiving training in these centres, members go on to implement the practices they have learned in their homes. They are then able to sell vegetables, tomatoes, herbs, and tree plants to their local communities and receive an income to support their families.

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In partnership with the Forestry Commission the wellness groups are also planting indigenous trees during the rainy season. These are easy to grow and are beneficial especially during the dry seasons because the trees are drought tolerant.

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Wellness groups are also making efforts to minimise the effects of climate change through planting hedges which help mitigate the effects of strong winds and storms. Practical training on adapting to climate change is an integral part of the training provided.

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Trees planted in the Gardens of Life contribute positively to mitigating the effects of climate change as they contribute to the amount of water vapour in the atmosphere. The indigenous trees produce edible fruits, some of which are used to prepare drinks and porridges which help support nutrition.

Trees are also supplied to members of the Gardens of Life to plant at home. Education is provided on reducing tree cutting and the use of coal for cooking, both of which contribute to global warming, along with involvement in waste management, and periodic clean up campaigns organised across the community.

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One participant in the programme, Hope, is 48 years old and a mother of four children. She tested positive for HIV five years ago and immediately experienced a negative impact on her family income and food security. Some of her children who were in secondary school had to drop out of school.

The situation caused a lot of stress and arguing in the family and her health deteriorated. The nurses at her local clinic advised her to seek counselling and social support. Hope, and other people living with HIV in her area, tried to mobilize themselves but there were no existing structures to support them.

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When the Anglican Diocese of Masvingo introduced the HIV Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Programme, Hope and others in her community embraced it. They were helped to set up a nutrition garden where they were able to meet and support each other as they grew vegetables.

The income generating activities that she was taught in the garden enabled Hope to send her secondary aged children back to school. Her health has also improved with the extra nutrition, along with adhering to her Antiretroviral therapy. She now shares her story in her village and many of those who initially shunned her have joined the wellness groups.

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And so this is how the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe is expressing the Gospel in action. This is 'striving for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness'. Restoring dignity, physical and mental health to the recipients of the Gardens of Life programme; enabling them to return to their communities restored in body, mind and spirit to encourage others catch this same vision. At the same time they are addressing issues of climate change and the ecological crisis that communities in Zimbabwe are facing so starkly.

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£35 WOULD PAY FOR TOOLS TO MAKE FENCING
£60 WOULD PAY FOR ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT SUCH AS SHOVELS AND HOSEPIPES
£140 WOULD PAY FOR GRAFTED TREES
£350 WOULD PAY FOR SEEDS AND ORGANIC MANURE

We can be a part of this work by supporting the USPG Harvest appeal, 'Gardens of Life' this year:

£35 would pay for tools to make fencing

hosepipes

£60 would pay for essential equipment such as shovels and

£140 would pay for grafted trees

£350 would pay for seeds and organic manure

Would you or your church community please commit to funding one of these important parts of the Gardens of Life programme through USPG this Harvest? By partnering with the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe in this way, we are joining them in 'striving for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness'. Thank you.

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Lord of the harvest, thank you for all you have given us.
Help us to share our abundance with those across the world this harvest-time,
And work together to protect the most vulnerable and your creation,
That all may share in the provision of your gracious harvest. Amen.

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Slide 18 Details of how to donate and thank you

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GLOBAL MISSION

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