



Partners in Zimbabwe show strong commitment to education

Zimbabwe's once formidable education system, which became one of Africa's best in the decades following independence in 1980, has been hit hard by spending cuts and economic contractions in the 21st century. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s global partners in Zimbabwe have a strong commitment to education as a mechanism for tackling poverty and enabling all Zimbabweans to know life in fullness.

Soon after independence, the Harare Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) turned most of its schools over to the government, retaining only one, a primary school at Nyabira, as a church-run institution. Today, Nyabira is a vibrant, dynamic school that has grown to serve more than 1,000 pupils from pre-school to seventh grade.

At the same time, the social and economic upheavals in Zimbabwe since 2000 have led the church to see education as an increasingly important area of ministry. In 2014, the CCAP Harare Synod started a high school, Rock Haven Academy, at its Lay Training Center just outside of Harare. The school caters to area residents, including dozens of families who were evicted from neighbouring farms during successive waves of land seizures.

Within a year, enrolment grew from 50 to 110. Learners use the Training Center's facilities or meet outside when the center is in use. In order to secure government recognition and support, the school must meet certain basic requirements—including the need to have dedicated classrooms, administrative offices and restrooms. So, with the help of area residents, the CCAP is building four classrooms, expected to accommodate up to 200 pupils. Rev. Libias Boloma, the General Secretary of the CCAP Harare Synod, noted that the school is a particular asset for girls. When school is far away, he said, "many parents would opt to keep their girls at home rather than to expose them to any danger ... walking so far alone in the bush."

Even so, the school's principal, Mr. Girson Dzonzi, says that the learners "walk an average of ten kilometers every day, to and from school," setting off at 6 a.m. Without the school, most of the students would just stay home, Mr. Dzonzi said, because there are no other secondary schools in the vicinity. The teachers work long hours for just a "token" income. Although the school charges nominal fees of \$20 per month, only about 10 percent of the students can afford to pay.

Given the incredible dedication of its founders, its teachers and its students, Rock Haven Academy lives up to its motto, “Endure to Succeed.” The school strives to provide quality education and to impart Christian values of honesty and perseverance. And the CCAP is working to provide further educational opportunities through its congregations, a number of which either operate community schools or host private schools.

The Presbytery of Zimbabwe of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA), the PC(USA)’s other global partner in Zimbabwe, has even more extensive involvement in educations, dating back to the early 20th Century. The church operates 11 primary and secondary schools, mostly in the southwest portion of the country, around Bulawayo. One of the newest is the secondary school at Mnundu. Now in its third year, the school’s 135 pupils share facilities with the primary school that the church has operated on this site since 1946. A new classroom block stands completed up to the tops of the windows, awaiting funds for trusses to support the roof.

But the UPCSA’s priority has not been completing the classrooms, but rather meeting the pupils’ and the surrounding community’s more urgent need for clean, healthy drinking water. The church recently installed a borehole, solar-powered pump and a 10,000 litre storage tank to provide safe drinking water for the drought-stricken Mnundu community. With a reliable water supply, the school can also look into developing boarding facilities for students who are walking more than 10 kilometers to attend daily classes.

The PC(USA) shares our Zimbabwean partners’ commitment to education as a key factor in addressing the root causes of poverty in southern Africa. As we accompany our partners in these efforts, we seek not only to mobilise resources for basic educational needs, such as classrooms and teachers, but also to promote creative and effective teaching methods, to encourage measures that create a safe and healthy learning environment, and to foster holistic approaches that also address students’ and teachers’ needs for water, food and shelter.

For more information on education ministries in Zimbabwe, see [correspondence](#)¹ from [Doug Tilton](#)². To enable our partners to do more to address the root causes of poverty by educating new generation of Zimbabweans, please make a gift to assist the work of the UPCSA Presbytery of Zimbabwe ([E052041](#))³ or the CCAP Harare Synod ([E052040](#))⁴.

¹ <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/letter/tilton-douglas-2015-04/>

² <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/dr-douglas-tilton/>

³ <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/E052041/>

⁴ <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/E052040/>