

How the Children Hold On in the midst of the AIDS pandemic

Thanks to a generous donation from a United Methodist family in the United States, a new denominational program will serve AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. The General Board of Global Ministries, the church's mission agency, is also assisting with funding. The monies will help cover school fees for primary and secondary school, support school feeding programs, and more.



Credit: Mike Dubose/UMNS

UMCOR is witnessing to the love of Jesus on behalf of all United Methodists.

In Zimbabwe alone about 980,000 children are orphans as a result of one or both parents' death from AIDS.

Girls are especially vulnerable. More often than boys, girls must leave school to care for their siblings or sick relatives. The World AIDS Campaign underlines the plight of such girls in its theme for 2004, "Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS."

"Some children collapse when their parents die. Others decide to do what they think their parents would do. That's how they hold on," says Dr. Peter Fasan, dean of

the health sciences faculty at Africa University and lead implementer of UMCOR's new program with AIDS orphans in Zimbabwe. Sustaining the program is participation of both Zimbabwean annual conferences, community representatives, a broad-based board of directors, and Dr. Fasan's leadership.

The new program will help some 3,000 to 6,000 children, many of them girls, to continue in school. For orphans like 13-year-old Margaret Masawi the project offers hope to hold on. Margaret dreams of becoming a teacher. Young as she is, she heads a household. Both her parents died in 2000. She looks after two younger brothers on her own.



In Zimbabwe, Margaret Masawi, age 13, cooks for her two brothers. Their parents died a month apart in 2000. Credit: Andra Stevens/AU Today

“My greatest hope is that each child will live as normal a life as possible” but “That’s a utopian dream,” Dr. Fasan admits. Some 2,500 HIV/AIDS-related burials take place each week in Zimbabwe. “But,” he adds thoughtfully, “all things are possible in God.”

Get Involved.

1. Pray for people around the world who have been infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

2. Educate your church and community.

Observe World AIDS Day on December 1. Find resources at <http://gbgm-umc.org/health/>. UMCOR also offers "Generation of Hope," reissued as a DVD with study guide. The movie highlights the resilience of children whose parents have died of AIDS. It's available free from UMCOR at the address below. Preview the film online and find additional resources at:

<http://gbgm-umc.org/health/aidsafrica/hope.cfm>.

3. Share in important United Methodist AIDS ministries. Give to **UMCOR Advance #982842, AIDS Orphan Trust: #101218** and **AIDS Awareness and Children Impacted by HIV/AIDS in Africa**. Write the # and name of the project on your offering envelope and in the memo line of your check.

How to Give.

By Offering For local church and Annual Conference credit, put your gift in the offering plate on Sunday.

By Check Make your check to **UMCOR** and send to UMCOR, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 330, New York, NY 10115.

By Credit Card Call toll-free (800) 554-8583

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The United Methodist Committee on Relief delivers hope and enhances human dignity through food, shelter, health and peace projects.

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