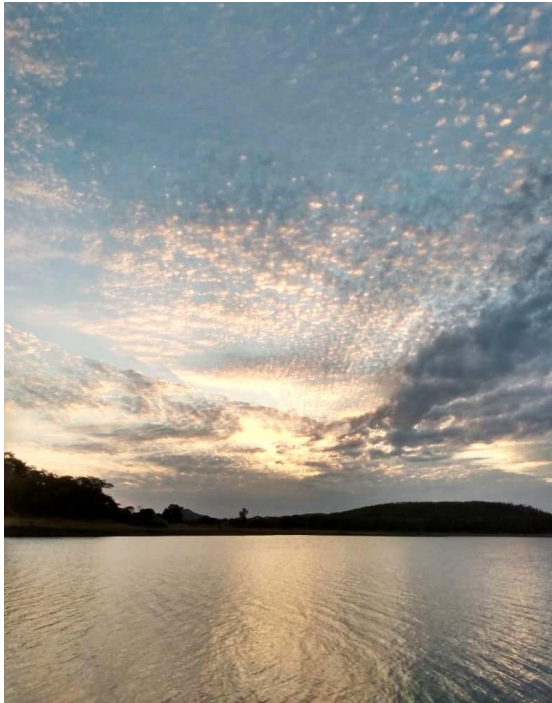


# ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

**AT TIMES** my articles may sound a tad depressing, but I reflect ArtPeace's commentaries on life with photos. Despite the hardship, they retain a sense of humour and are a warm friendly bunch. The beauty of their country still resonates with me. Many years ago around 2am, I vividly recall a tremendous electric storm over Lake Kariba punctuated by cracks of thunder ricocheting across a vast expanse of water silhouetted against a purple sky. A few small kapenta fishing boats twinkled in the distance as hippos grunted noisily under my elevated abode - magic! The country's lifestyle exudes a feeling of togetherness and belonging helped by a slower pace of life.



Artist Peter Kananji's recent message captures their resilience: [The weather is now suitable for fishing as winter ends so I have restarted fishing - see my photos: 1\) of the sky at the dam, 2\) my catch of fish and 3\) wild fruits called matohwe in high demand due to hunger.](#)



[Many search the bush to find this fruit to fill stomachs. Tonight, my family will not go hungry!](#)

**FORTUNE** was delighted with his last donation and bought second hand clothes to sell outside the dilapidated shed he calls home. He was overjoyed at being able to replace his broken crutch so can walk further. He has been in agony with toothache for weeks but can now afford to visit a



dentist. I hope the congregation saw his uplifting video sent along with 'The Grapevine', highlighting his practical use of donations. He is keen to find a stall at a small nearby shopping centre which would command better prices.



**FAREWELL TO DAVID:** When Marlow URC elders pondered what to give their minister, the Revd. David Downing on his new appointment as Moderator of the Southwestern Synod of the United Reformed Church, their Church Secretary Valerie Brownridge hit on the idea of an ArtPeace sculpture. Marlow have been a huge supporter of ArtPeace over many years so this would prove a happy reminder for David. Valerie, an Aberdonian, who once held a senior position at the UK Embassy in Harare, liked my photo of Godfrey's rabbit in leopard rock which the elders approved. She collected the piece a few days before the presentation and sent this email: 'David and Jo were absolutely delighted with the rabbit - as were all the congregation! They also really appreciated having the information about the artist which made it so personal and so special. Thanks again for the note you prepared. The video message from the artists was a big hit. David and Jo were very moved. Please thank the artists. So all in all it was just perfect.'



**SNAP SHOTS FROM ZIMBABWE:** From Godfrey – 'John, these primary school children are holding their school lessons outside on the ground due to inadequate desks, chairs and class rooms. Some end up sick because of the dust and fumes inhaled every day'. Above right - little children are constantly used to fetch water from boreholes owing to the continuing drought.

**MEANWHILE,** Zimbabwe's corrupt brutal government continues to cast a dark shadow over the country. 78 young people have been in prison in Harare since 16<sup>th</sup> June. The Avondale 78 as they are called, were arrested when attending a gathering to commemorate the 'Day of the African Child' at the home of opposition politician Jameson Timba. They were traumatized and beaten by the police whilst in custody. These youngsters appear to be pawns at a time of political window dressing - out of sight, out of mind, until after the SADC (South African Development Community) Summit to be held in Harare on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of August. All this, when more than half of the population is going to bed hungry. It is thanks to the millions of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora who send money home for family members. Likewise, our support for ArtPeace keeps heart and soul together. They usually send a group photo after donations etc. arrive but not this month as: 'We dare not risk taking a group photo due to numerous arrests at every gathering by state security agents because of their concerns about demonstrations'. Artist Togara from Mazoe said: 'If I had the opportunity to leave Zimbabwe, I would. Life is so frustrating, that's the naked truth. No food, no water and no money'.

**Johnston Simpson**