

Sisters bid to generate cash for deaf children and orphans in Zimbabwe



Parishioners of a Dumbarton church are preparing to make a special effort to raise funds to help a local nun who is working with 300 orphaned, abandoned and deaf children in Zimbabwe.

St Patrick's Church in Strathleven Place raised more than £2,000 in March for Sister Paulette, formerly Mary Frances Curran from Castlehill in Dumbarton, whose school and orphanage desperately needs a new generator to pump water up a hill to their premises.

A major stumbling block is the cost -- in inflation blighted Zimbabwe it works out at a breathtaking one billion, 640 million Zimbabwe dollars.

However, a friendly Scottish engineer is working on the case and the nuns are hopeful that the work can be completed for £15,000 sterling.

Now the church hopes it can help with cash raised from a Zimbabwe Evening, which will take place in the Church Hall on Friday 11th December 7.30pm. Tickets cost £2, including Bingo Card, and are now on sale at the church.

Sister Paulette's aunts, Kitty and Elizabeth Jones from High Overtoun, are once again organising the charity event, which will include a Christmas Fare and seasonal entertainment.

There will be a Christmas Tombola -- and donations for this can be brought to the parish house or gifts can be uplifted if you telephone 01389 767942.

Elizabeth Jones said: "We want people to come along and have a good time and support a good - and very urgent - cause."

Sister Paulette is a missionary whose Dominican order runs an orphanage at Emerald Hill in Harare. The school for deaf children was attached to the orphanage 30 years ago.

She said: "Many of our children are orphaned, abandoned, abused, deaf and HIV positive, but they are our children and we aim to give them all the means possible to live a happy and constructive life, making the most of their gifts and talents.

"Our electricity is often cut off here. Not only do we have no means of cooking, we have no water as the water has to be pumped to our place at the top of the hill.

"We desperately need the generator to pump the water. With 92 orphans and 244 deaf children we cannot survive long without water."

Kitty Jones, who is a former head teacher of St Ronan's Primary School in Bonhill, Alexandria, said: "People here have been very good. The children's plight has touched their hearts.

"They have shown that there is no such thing as compassion fatigue in Dumbarton -- and we are very grateful to them for their generosity."

Sister Paulette is a school teacher who began her career in St Martin's Primary School, Renton, where she worked for three years.

The former Notre Dame High School pupil has been a missionary in Africa for 40 years.

Canon Gerry Conroy, parish priest of St Patrick's, said: "The plight of these children is desperate. We hope that the money raised here in Dumbarton will help to alleviate some of that suffering and help the nuns in their work. I know the support of our parishioners is greatly appreciated by Sister Paulette and her fellow missionaries."