The United Methodist Church, Makoni Buhera District, received with joy a donation of a motorbike valued at $2 000.00 from The Association of Annual Conference Lay leaders.

Mr Simon Mafunda with the motorbike donated by the Association of Annual Conference Lay leaders heading for Chikore UMC

Mr Simon Mafunda, The Zimbabwe East Annual Conference lay leader handed over the motorbike during a colourful ceremony which was attended by the district leadership.

The recipient the Rev Annamore Kahlari could not attend due to lack of public transport.
This donation came as a great relief and is well-timed as public transport has been banned by the government in a bid to control the spread of COVID 19, leaving many commuters stranded.

The donated motorbike therefore becomes an appropriate mode of transport in the wake of COVID 19 control at the same time helping the pastors to advance the ministry in rural communities where church members are spaced, the road network is poor and of rugged terrain.

The District Lay Leader Mrs Loveness Bandure said, Makoni Buhera district has 27 pastors and only 4 have circuit vehicles and 5 have motorbikes.

Bandure thanked the Association of Annual Conference Lay leaders for the provision of a motorcycle to their district. She thanked mostly her Conference Lay leader Mr Mafunda for selecting Makoni Buhera District as a beneficiary among other 13 districts of the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area.
BACKGROUND OF THE ASSOCIATION BY MR SIMON MAFUNDA

Mr Simon Mafunda

Mr Mafunda said that the Association of Annual Conference lay leaders brings together conferences lay leaders across the global connection and meets once every year.

The purpose of the association is:

1. To initiate strategies and policies to strengthen the presence of the voice of laity in the United Methodist Church.
2. To enable a mutual ministry among lay people and clergy alike as set out in the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.
3. To exchange information concerning the lay ministry of the United Methodist Church.
4. To take any or all action deemed desirable by the Association to promote and support Lay ministry and.
5. To provide conference lay leaders an opportunity to share experiences, ideas for ministry and educational opportunities for lay members.

Mafunda said, “at our annual convocation in February 2020 in Nashville Tennessee, the Association of Annual Conference Lay leaders unanimously voted to support the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference’s efforts in alleviating transport challenges for rural ministry and donated a motorbike valued at $2 000.00.”

This motorbike becomes the third to be sourced for the district by Mr Mafunda following two earlier donations made as follows:

1. Through Joe Kilpatrick
2. Through Sunday School Children of Elsie UMC of Nebraska Great Plains USA.

Joe Kilpatrick, who is the President of Bike and Bibles and a lifetime United Methodist long service member within the North Georgia Annual Conference led in the donation of four new motorbikes valued for $5 000.00.
The motorbikes from Bike and Bibles were distributed to Zimbabwe West Annual Conference Masvingo District and Mudzi Mutoko District.

The other two went to Zimbabwe East Annual Conference, Marange and Makoni Buhera districts.

**DISTRIBUTION OF FOUR MOTORBIKES**

*Four motorbikes from Bike and Bibles for both Annual Conferences*

The motorbikes were shared between the two annual conferences and handed over to the respective pastors during the Annual Conferences at Old Mutare Mission and at Murehwa Mission in 2019.

The main objectives are to enhance the work of the ministry to rural circuits which are faced with many multifaceted challenges.

The beneficiaries were Pastor Paul Nyagomo of Mutsago Circuit in Marange District of the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference.

Mutsago has four local churches and Pastor Nyagomo had to traverse most of the area on foot as there are no buses in the area.

*Pastor Paul Nyagomo in Mutsago UMC – Marange District*

“I want to thank Kilpatrick for the donation of a motorbike which has enhance my mobility as I execute my ministerial duties,” said Nyagomo adding that he can now reach out to all corners of his circuit.
Pastor Emmanuel Rambeni of Dorowa-Murambinda circuit in Makoni Buhera District was another beneficiary in the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference.

Pastor Samuel Maunga of Gutu-Chepiri Circuit in Masvingo District of the Zimbabwe West Annual Conference joyfully received another motorbike.

Lastly was The Rev Jonathan Chihwai of Nyamuzizi Circuit in Mutoko-Mudzi District of Zimbabwe West Annual Conference who used to walk for almost five hours to Hurumutumbu local church before his circuit was blessed with a motorbike.

“Mr Mafunda thanked Joe Kilpatrick and his organization Bike and Bibles for adding four motorbikes to Zimbabwe Episcopal Area who equally felt persuaded to help us. We shared equally the four bikes worth USD$5,000.00 between the two conferences of Zimbabwe Episcopal Areas,” Mafunda said.

ASSOCIATION OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE LAYLEADER DONATION
The handover ceremony was held in Rusape on the 5th of July 2020 for the Rev Annamore Kahlari of Chikore UMC.

The DS Rev Diana Matikiki and the District lay leader Mrs Loveness Bandure on behalf of the pastor received the motorbike.

“Through the support of Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders,” said Mafunda, “a brand new off-road motorbike, two helmets and riders jacket all worth USD$2,000.00 were purchased and handed over to Chikore UMC for the Rev Annamore Kahlari on the 5th of July 2020.”

The motorbikes assist rural pastors in churches where the road network is poor or where they travel long distances or the terrain is very rugged and steep.

He also thanked other players in enhancing mobility through provision of motorbikes within the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area.
“As Conference Lay Leader,” Mafunda said, “I am grateful to the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders through the leadership of our president Nancy Davis as well as the immediate past President Sharon Gregory for this wonderful gesture”.

Mafunda added, “It was just timeous as our rural pastors face serious transport challenges in the backdrop of the COVID 19 pandemic. Because of social distancing restrictions, it is no longer easy to jump onto public transport and the bikes have been a big relief.”

“My wish is for all pastors who are no mobile to be equipped with mobility to enhance the ministry and their health,” Mafunda said.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN OF ELSIE UMC OF NEBRASKA GREAT PLAINS USA MOTORBIKE DONATION.

Mr Mafunda said that during his Chabadza exchange program in the Great Plains Episcopal Area especially in Nebraska, he visited many churches including Elsie UMC, during which he shared lots of issues including ministry issues.

Among the many stories he shared, the kids were touched by the plight of the transport issues of rural pastors of Zimbabwe.

During one of their vacational outings, they decided to fundraise and managed to raise about $360.00. They then donated towards this transport initiative.

Mr Mafunda then topped up and bought a motorbike which was then donated to the Rev Tadious Chikosi of Runyange UMC, Makoni Buhera District during the 2019 Annual Conference.

The lay leader felt humbled and challenged by the wonderful gesture by these young leaders of today and tomorrow. May God continue to bless them.

The Rev Tadious Chikosi pastor in charge Runyange UMC in Makoni Buhera district thanked the children for the kind gesture towards his ministry.
“My circuit has four local churches which are 15 km (9.3 miles) apart. I used to walk on foot and would take several hours to visit all of them,” said The Rev Chikosi.

“It was a headache when you think about how you will reach the local churches.

“From the time I was privileged to have a motorbike, my mobility has been made easy. I can reach every corner, visiting the elderly, serving Holy Communion and attending to any needs in my charge.

“During this era of COVID 19 pandemic, I am much safer because I always travel alone. In addition, all public transport has been banned and this has not affected me. I can easily travel to the district offices for any meeting and get there on time,” The Rev Chikosi said.

REMARKS FROM MRS LOVENESS BANDURE – DISTRICT LAY LEADER MAKONI BUHERA DISTRICT

Mrs Bandure thanked the Association of Annual Conference Lay leaders for the provision of a motorcycle to my district.

“We thank Mafunda for setting the pace. His assistance in enhancing mobility will go far especially during this COVID 19 where passengers are stranded,” Bandure said.

“The situation in my district is so pathetic considering that only 4 out of 27 circuits have circuit vehicles. In addition to the 4 circuit vehicles, we have 5 motorcycles. This means 9 pastors are mobile out of 27,” added Bandure.

“This scenario is not healthy for the pastors and district. The pastors face a torrid time to move in their circuits and even to attend to District meetings. Some pastors wake up as early as 1 am to get transport to Rusape,” said Bandure.
Bandure further said, “My wish is for every pastors to be mobile and reach out to every member and bring more souls to Christ.”

REMARKS FROM THE REV ANNAMORE KAHLARI

The Rev Annamore Kahlari could not hide her joy on receiving the motorbike.

“As Chikore UMC, we would like to extend our gratitude for the favour we got this year of receiving a motorbike to ease mobility in the ministry of God.

“Visitations and attending to funerals is much easier now,” said The Rev Kahlari.

The circuit is composed of 5 local churches well-spaced said Rev Kahlari.

“Once again thank you so much, for selecting me as the only beneficiary. May God bless you in abundance,” said Rev Kahlari.
APPRECIATION FROM THE DS REV DIANA MATIKITI

DS Rev Diana Matikiti

DS Rev Matikiti appreciated the gesture from the Association of the Annual Conference lay leaders.

“We have received a new motorbike to be used in Chikore UMC which is the most rural and remote circuit. “The Rev Annamore Kahlari, the pastor in charge when she received the good message she was very happy,” said DS Rev Matikiti.

“Her area is very big, geographically, the terrain uneven and unfavourable. This donation of the motorbike will take her a long way in advancing in her ministry,” added DS Rev Matikiti.

“With the motorbike,” said DS Rev Matikiti, “she will be able to travel from one local church to the other in a short space of time,” adding that the pastors used to visit local church once in six weeks.

“I am confident that this will ease the mobility of the pastor and be able to execute her duties with little hassles,” DS Rev Matikiti said.

“May the good Lord bless this association for evermore Amen.”

Compiled by Ms Kudzai Chingwe ZEAC Communicator – RUSAPE– Makoni Buhera District.

Ms Kudzai Chingwe

THE END