

# ZANE POEMS 2015

ZANE: Zimbabwe A National Emergency

Reg Charity No 1112949

“Friendship is the most delightful of human relationships. Passion is not disinterested, but friendship is as nearly so as is possible in human beings. One wants nothing of a friend except the delight of his or her company.”

Malcolm Muggeridge

“After all – though our novels now ignore it – friendship is the greatest of worldly goods. Certainly to me it is the chief happiness of life. If I had to give a piece of advice to a young man about a place to live, I think I should say, “sacrifice almost everything to live where you can be near your friends.”

C.S. Lewis

“God made a wonderful beginning,  
But man spoiled it all by sinning,  
We hope that the story  
Will end in God’s glory,  
But at the moment the other side’s winning.”

Anon

Dear Reader

## **A Forgotten People: Hidden Misery and Despair**

I am pleased that ZANE's poetry booklets have proved popular and I hope you enjoy this year's selection. Please note that these publications always generate income many times the cost of their production and distribution, and we hope that this booklet will be retained and perhaps find its way to a wider audience.

We are grateful to all of you who have supported ZANE over the past very difficult year.

ZANE's vital role is to remind people of the plight that faces so many lonely people trapped in Mugabe's Zimbabwe. The country remains in turmoil and is now officially ranked as being the second poorest in the world. What a tragic story that a nation blessed with all the gifts that nature can bestow should today find itself comprehensively ruined by folly and naked greed.

The ZANE team is daily confronted by increasingly difficult cases of hardship because the policy of "indigenisation" – larceny in plain language – has resulted in money draining from Zimbabwe. Chronic food shortages, the result of a failed harvest, are particularly affecting the weak and destitute. Morale is at an all-time low, and our waiting list of desperate and hungry pensioners seeking aid increases daily.

Yet our ZANE supporters have every reason to be proud and here are some of the reasons why:

- Without the loving attention of ZANE's staff and the provision of medicines and food, the lives of over 2,600 elderly and vulnerable people would be in dire jeopardy.



- The lives of circa 1,500 children afflicted by clubfoot, all facing a life blighted by disability and stigma, have been transformed.
- Thanks to our hearing aid initiative, hundreds can again hear after years of blank silence.
- A number of victims of land mine explosions have now received prosthetic limbs.

Life transformation amongst the forgotten poor has only been made possible through your unstinting generosity. Of course, the world's attention has shifted to focus on other disasters, so the forgotten people of Zimbabwe continue to need your help – and more than ever before.

I pay tribute to ZANE's team in Zimbabwe, who deliver humanitarian aid and kindness in often acutely difficult circumstances.

Please take a look at pages 34-35 and see the 10 reasons that make ZANE a unique charity in Africa.

Thank you once again for your generous support – you should feel proud of the vital difference you are making.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Benyon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature is a thin horizontal line.

Tom Benyon OBE

*You will doubtless receive a good number of “family” letters at Christmas that make you envious, perhaps even irritated. Consider this one:*

## Christmas Wishes

Dear Distant Friends,

Surprisingly, we’ve still got your addresses,  
So here’s a list of all our latest triumphs and successes.  
This year we’ve been as busy as a family of beavers  
(Though they’re just furry animals while we are high achievers.)

We’ve bought a big new house (my wife corrects me – it’s a mansion.)  
Emily’s verses won a prize for prosody and scansion.  
Timothy got his partnership and Clare her PhD  
Which all reflects extremely well on Dorothy and me.

Our trips abroad (for which we didn’t even have to save)  
Prove we’re cosmopolitan, cultured and fit and brave:  
Kilimanjaro, Venice, San Francisco and Belize.  
(Sorry if you can only dream of holidays like these!)

We’re thinking of you, humble friends, in terrace/semi/hovel.  
We’ll be in touch this time next year, but only if you grovel  
And say you wish that you were with us so much it makes you sick.  
Happy New Year to all of you!

Love Dorothy and Mick

Sophie Hannah



## The Technophobe

This WEB they natter about,  
It seems to grow wider and wider:  
But if wonders they seek, they should look  
At the intricate web of the spider.

The BLOGS (that is WEBLOGS) they write,  
They read and exchange and admire;  
But give me a crisp winter's day:  
I'd rather have logs on the fire.

They TWITTER all day to their friends  
(If friends you can call them) these nerds;  
But give me a morning in spring:  
What's wrong with the twitter of birds?

The NET they're absorbed in all day  
Till everything else is forgotten,  
But give me my net and my rod  
I'll go fishing with Walton and Cotton.

To their I-PADS and I-PODS and phones,  
To their laptops and screens they are slaves;  
Their hobby is SURFING the NET,  
But I'd rather be surfing the waves.

They spend all their time on their WI-FI  
As if it's the secret of life;  
And if that makes them happy, so be it;  
I'd rather spend time with the wife.

They're TEXTING from morning till night –  
More chatter and nothing to show for it;  
But give me an old fashioned book  
Just give me the text of a poet.

They SKYPE to the ends of the earth  
And think it's terrific – but why?  
I'm happy to sit in my garden,  
I'd much rather stare at the sky.

They say that YOUTUBE is the thing  
And for music it's excellent too  
They can go down the tube if they like  
But for me, I'd rather have You.

They sit staring into a screen  
And FACEBOOK as much as they can.  
To keep me from going insane,  
Please show me the face of a man.

Anon

Quiet in here tonight  
Isn't it?



“... Earth’s crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God,  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes  
– The rest sit round it and pluck  
blackberries ...”

From “Aurora Leigh”, Elizabeth Barrett Browning



### Mrs Beamish

Mrs Beamish stands in church, expression calm and holy,  
And when the organ plays, she mumbles hymns extremely slowly.  
A pillar of St Botolphs for twenty years or more,  
She does the flowers at Easter and the brass work on the door.  
But recently St Botolphs has gained a brand new vicar,  
His name is Ken, he’s single, and he wants the hymns sung quicker.  
And he’s introduced a custom, which Mrs Beamish hates,  
So she rounds upon the person next to her and very clearly states:

“Don’t you dare shake hands with me, or offer signs of peace.  
You lay a finger on me and I’ll send for the police!  
Don’t whisper ‘peace be with you’, this is the C of E,  
So bend the knee, say ‘thou’ and ‘thee’,  
And keep your hands off me!”

Ken tells us “love your neighbour” and Mrs Beamish sneers,  
“I only love my neighbours if I’ve known them thirty years.”  
Even when it isn’t Christmas, he lets youngsters in the church,  
He’s altered all the music after audience research.

They shout out “Alleluia”, they don’t act like me and you,  
The young women don’t wear hats and the young men quite often do.  
And they seem to like their hands enthusiastically wrung,  
Till they turn to Mrs Beamish and feel her acid tongue:



“Don’t you dare shake hands with me! I don’t know where you’ve been,  
You lay a finger on me and you’ll feel this tambourine!  
Don’t whisper ‘peace be with you’, this is the C of E!  
So bend the knee, say ‘thou’ and ‘thee’,  
And keep your hands off me!”

In the beginning was the Word read out loud by Thora Hird.  
Harry Secombe then would scream, “Morning has Broken” by a stream.  
Now the organ’s gone for scrap,  
Every vicar’s got the clap!

Ha–lle–lu–jah! Mrs Beamish, Mrs Beamish  
Ha–lle–lu–jah, she’s squeamish, so squeamish.  
“Don’t you dare shake hands with me, or turn to me and smile  
You’ll wake up spitting teeth out, face downwards in the aisle.  
Don’t whisper, ‘Peace be with you’, this is the C of E,  
You go just one inch too far, you’ll end up wearing that guitar,  
One false step in my direction, you’ll need to believe in the resurrection.  
So bend the knee, say ‘Thou’ and ‘Thee’,  
And keep your hands off me!”

Richard Stilgoe

## It Couldn't Be Done

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That "maybe it couldn't", but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.  
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
On his face. If he worried he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.



Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;  
At least no one ever has done it";  
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,  
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.  
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,  
Without any doubting or quiddit,  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,  
There are thousand to prophesy failure;  
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,  
The dangers that wait to assail you.  
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,  
Just take off your coat and go to it;  
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing  
That "cannot be done", and you'll do it.

Edgar Albert Guest

## The Birth of the Cello

One day Stradivarius was sitting in Cremona  
Outside the violin factory, of which he was the owner.  
He was eating a Cremona Rice Pudding for his lunch  
When he turned to Guadagnini and said, "I have a hunch –

You know these feet and inches? I think they're out of date,  
There's an idea of da Vinci's – we ought to metricate!"  
So he purchased some converters from a funny little geezer,  
Who forgot to say he'd used them when he built the Tower at Pisa.

So the factory went metric – every fingerboard and joint  
From now on was at the mercy of the dreaded decimal point.  
When the new violin was finished, he could scarce believe his eyes –  
It was gleaming, it was perfect – and ten times the normal size.

Stradivarius tried to lift it, this enormous violin –  
But no matter how he tried, it wouldn't go beneath his chin.  
An apprentice, Michelangelo (whose friends all called him Mike)  
Said, "I think it might be better if we fitted it with a spike."

(continued)



Stradivarius said, “You’re crazy – nobody could play a note  
With this thing upon his shoulder and a spike stuck through his throat.  
Mike said, “Master – why not take it from underneath your jaw  
And wrap your legs around it and stick it in the floor?”

“Well done!” said Stradivarius once he’d carefully climbed on,  
(And he played a piece upon it, which we now know as “The Swan”.)  
“I suppose we ought to name it, (so folk know what they’ve bought)  
Cremona Extra-Large Leg-Over – or “Cello” just for short.”

Richard Stilgoe

## God Says Yes to Me

I asked God if it was okay to be melodramatic  
and she said yes  
I asked her if it was okay to be short  
and she said it sure is  
I asked her if I could wear nail polish  
or not wear nail polish  
and she said honey  
she calls me that sometimes  
she said you can do just exactly  
what you want to  
Thanks God I said  
And is it even okay if I don’t paragraph  
my letters  
Sweetcakes God said  
who knows where she picked that up  
what I’m telling you is  
Yes Yes Yes

Kaylin Haight



### *In Times of Stress*

Grant me the serenity to  
Accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change  
The things I cannot accept,  
And the wisdom to hide  
The bodies of those I had to kill today  
Because they got on my nerves.

Also help me be careful  
Of the toes I tread on today,  
As they may be connected  
To the feet I have to kiss tomorrow.

Help me always to give 100%:  
12% on Monday  
23% on Tuesday  
40% on Wednesday  
20% on Thursday  
And 5% on Friday.

And help me to remember  
When I'm having a bad day,  
And it seems that people  
Are trying to wind me up...

That it takes 42 muscles to frown,  
And 28 to smile...

(But using more muscles burns more calories).

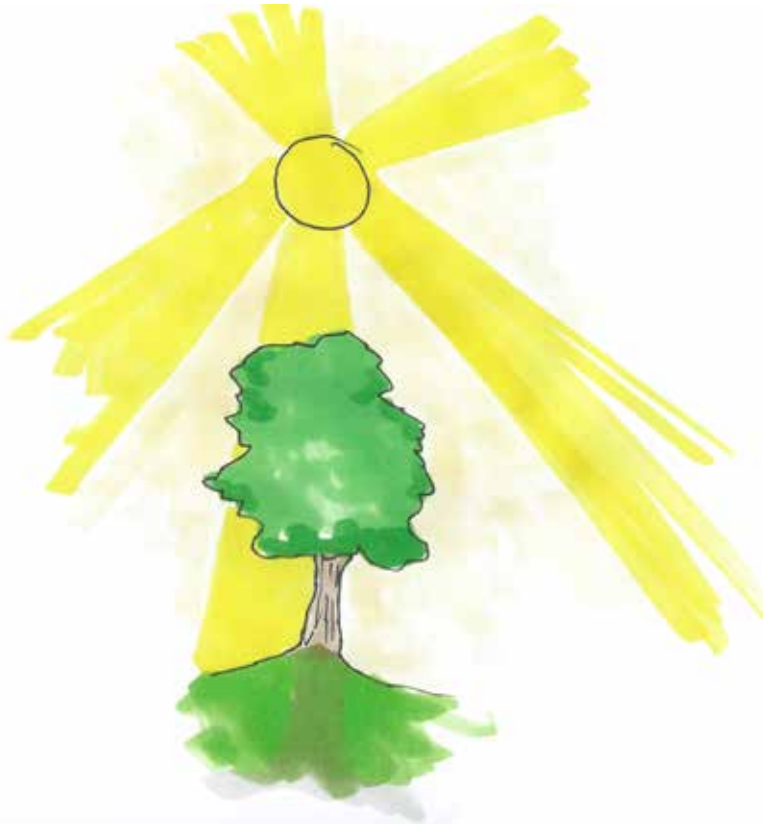
Anon



### *In Praise of Feeling Bad About Yourself*

The buzzard never says it is to blame.  
The panther wouldn't know what scruples mean.  
When the piranha strikes, it feels no shame.  
If snakes had hands, they'd claim their hands were clean.  
A jackal doesn't understand remorse.  
Lions and lice don't waver in their course.  
Why should they when they know they're right?  
Though hearts of killer whales may weigh a ton,  
In every other way they're light.  
On this third planet of the sun  
Among the signs of bestiality  
A clear conscience is number one.

Wisława Szymborska  
(translated by Clare Cavanagh)



## Trees

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

Joyce Kilmer

## Portrait of a Romantic

He is in love with the land that is always over  
The next hill and the next, with the bird that is never  
Caught, with the room beyond the looking glass.

He likes the half-hid, the half-heard, the half-lit,  
The man in the fog, the road without an ending,  
Stray pieces of torn words to piece together.



He is well aware that man is always lonely,  
Listening for an echo of his cry, crying for the moon,  
Making the moon his mirror, weeping in the night.

He often dives in the deep sea undertow  
Of the dark and dreaming mind. He turns at corners,  
Twists on his heel to trap his following shadow.

He is haunted by the face behind the face.  
He searches for last frontiers and lost doors,  
He tries to climb the wall around the world.

A.S.J. Tessimond



## In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

Lt Colonel John McCrae

*A professor of pathology at the University of Ve  
McCrae served as a medical officer during the First  
World War. He died in France in 1918.*



## Recessional

God of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine –  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The Captains and the Kings depart;  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
A humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire;  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that hold not Thee in Awe,  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the law –  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard;  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy mercy on Thy people Lord.

Rudyard Kipling

*(Perhaps with "lesser breeds",  
Kipling was predicting ISIL?)*

*Roosevelt sent the following extract from "The Building of the Ship" to Churchill on 19 January 1941:*

### O Ship of State

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!  
We know what Master laid thy keel,  
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by the gale!  
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
Are all with thee – are all with thee!



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

## You Will Forget

If you stay in comfort too long  
You will not know  
The weight of a water pot  
On the bald head of the village woman

You will forget  
The weight of three bundles of thatch grass  
On the sinewy neck of the woman  
Whose baby cries on her back  
For a blade of grass in its eyes

Sure, if you stay in comfort too long  
You will not know the pain  
Of child birth without a nurse in white

You will forget  
The thirst, the cracked dusty lips  
Of the woman in the valley  
On her way to the headman who isn't there

You will forget  
The pouring pain of a thorn prick  
With a load on the head  
If you stay in comfort too long

You will forget  
The wailing in the valley  
Of women losing a husband in the mines

You will forget  
The rough handshake of coarse palms  
Full of teary sorrow at the funeral

If you stay in comfort too long  
You will not hear  
The shrieky voice of old warriors sing  
The songs of fresh storied battlefields

You will forget  
The unfeeling bare feet  
Gripping the warm soil turned by the plough

You will forget  
The voice of the season talking to the oxen

Chenjerai Hove

## When It's Over

When it's over, I want to say: all my life  
I was a bride, married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
If I have made of my life something particular, and real.  
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
Or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Mary Oliver



## Not Love Perhaps

This is not love perhaps,  
Love that lays down its life,  
That many waters cannot quench,  
Nor the floods drown,  
But something written in lighter ink,  
Said in a lower tone, something perhaps,  
Especially our own.

A need at times, to be together and talk,  
And then the finding we can walk  
More firmly through dark narrow places,  
And meet more easily nightmare faces;  
A need to reach out, sometimes, hand to hand,  
And then find Earth less like an alien land;  
A need for alliance to defeat  
The whisperers at the corner of the street.

A need for inns on roads, islands in seas,  
Halts for discoveries to be shared,  
Maps checked, notes compared;  
A need, at times, of each for each,  
Direct as the need of throat and tongue for speech.

A.S.J. Tessimond

### The Wicked Fairy at the Manger

My gift for the child:

No wife, kids, home;  
No money sense. Unemployable.  
Friends, yes, but of the wrong sort –  
The work-shy, women, dregs,  
Petty infringers of the law, persons  
With notifiable diseases,  
Poll tax collectors, tarts;  
The bottom rung.  
His end?  
I think we'll make it  
Public, prolonged, painful.

*Right*, said the baby, *That was roughly*  
*What we had in mind.*

U.A. Fanthorpe

### The Latest Decalogue

Thou shalt have one God only; who  
Would be at the expense of two?  
No graven images may be  
Worshipp'd, except the currency:  
Swear not at all; since for thy curse  
Thine enemy is none the worse:  
At church on Sunday to attend  
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:  
Honour thy parents; that is, all  
From whom advancement may befall:  
Thou shalt not kill: but need'st not strive  
Officiously to keep alive:  
Do not adultery commit;  
Advantage rarely comes of it:  
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,  
When it's so lucrative to cheat:  
Bear not false witness; let the lie  
Have time on its own wings to fly:  
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition  
Approves all forms of competition.

The sum of all is, thou shalt love,  
If anybody, God above:  
At any rate shall never labour  
More than thyself to love thy neighbour.

Arthur Hugh Clough

## On Children

Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,  
for they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.  
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.

Kahil Gibran



## A Psalm of Life

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream!  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not the goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act, – act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



## What the Doctor Said

He said it doesn't look good  
he said it looks bad in fact real bad  
he said I counted thirty-two of them on one lung before  
I quit counting them  
I said I'm glad I wouldn't want to know  
about any more being there than that  
he said are you a religious man do you  
kneel down in forest groves and let yourself ask for help  
when you come to a waterfall  
mist blowing against your face and arms  
do you stop and ask for understanding at those moments  
I said not yet but I intend to start today  
He said I'm real sorry he said  
I wish I had some other kind of news to give you  
I said Amen and he said something else  
I didn't catch and not knowing what else to do  
and not wanting him to have to repeat it  
and me to have to fully digest it  
I just looked at him  
for a minute and he looked back it was then  
I jumped up and shook hands with this man who'd just given me  
something no one else on earth had ever given me  
I may have even thanked him habit being so strong

Raymond Carver

*Carver died of lung cancer in 1988 aged 50.*

## The Moor

It was like a church to me.  
I entered it on soft foot,  
Breath held like a cap in the hand.  
It was quiet.  
What God there was made himself felt,  
Not listened to, in clean colours  
That brought a moistening of the eye,  
In a movement of the wind over grass.

There were no prayers said. But stillness  
Of the heart's passions – that was praise  
Enough; and the mind's cession  
Of its kingdom. I walked on,  
Simple and poor, while the air crumbled  
And broke on me as generously as bread.

R.S. Thomas

## Jesus of the Scars

If we have never sought, we seek Thee now;  
Thine eyes burn through the dark, our only stars;  
We must have sight of thorn-pricks on Thy brow,  
We must have Thee, O Jesus of the Scars.

The heavens frighten us; they are too calm;  
In all the universe we have no place.  
Our wounds are hurting us; where is the balm?  
Lord Jesus, by Thy Scars, we claim Thy grace.

If, when the doors are shut, Thou drawest near,  
Only reveal those hands, that side of Thine;  
We know to-day what wounds are, have no fear,  
Show us Thy Scars, we know the countersign.

The other Gods were strong, but Thou wast weak;  
They rode, but thou didst stumble to a throne:  
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,  
And not a God has wounds, but Thou alone.

Edward Shillito

## The Pulley

When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
“Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can;  
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,  
Contract into a span.”

So strength first made a way;  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.  
When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.

“For if I should,” said he,  
“Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
And rest in nature, not the God of Nature:  
So both would losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,  
But keep them with repining restlessness;  
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.”

George Herbert

## Rich Man

Rich man, rich man, who are you?  
Do you seek the Christ Child too?  
In your palace and in your court,  
Life is busy, life is short,  
Have you time to go away  
To find a baby in the hay?  
Can you get your camel through  
The needle's eye, as you must do?

Rich man, rich man, you've come far.  
Where did you learn to trust a star  
Instead of turning to a king  
To guide you in your wandering?  
Rich man, how did you grow wise  
In spite of all your kingly guise?  
Who taught you to play your part,  
To bring an educated heart  
To the stable in the west  
So you could kneel there and be blessed?

Elizabeth Rooney

## Mistletoe

Sitting under the mistletoe  
(pale green, fairy mistletoe),  
One last candle burning low,  
All the sleepy dancers gone,  
Just one candle burning on,  
Shadows lurking everywhere:  
Someone came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go  
Nodding under the mistletoe  
(pale green, fairy mistletoe),  
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,  
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,  
Stooped in the still and shadowy air,  
Lips unseen – and kissed me there.

Walter de la Mare



*Please note that half way through the poem, Betjeman mentions a lady called Mrs Knight: in the 1950s, she was apparently a notable Gospel sceptic.*

## *The Conversion of St Paul*

Now is the time when we recall  
The sharp Conversion of St Paul.  
Converted! Turned the wrong way round –  
A man who seemed till then quite sound,  
Keen on religion – very keen –  
No one, it seems, had ever been  
So keen on persecuting those  
Who said that Christ was God and chose  
To die for this absurd belief  
As Christ had died beside the thief.  
Then in a sudden blinding light  
Paul knew that Christ was God all right –  
And very promptly lost his sight.  
Poor Paul! They led him by the hand  
He who had been so high and grand  
A helpless blunderer, fasting, waiting,  
Three days inside himself debating  
In physical blindness: “As it’s true  
That Christ is God and died for you,  
Remember all the things you did  
To keep His Gospel message hid.

Remember how you helped them even  
To throw the stones that murdered Stephen.  
And do you think that you are strong  
Enough to own that you were wrong?”  
They must have been an awful time,  
Those three long days repenting crime  
Till Ananias came and Paul  
Received his sight, and more than all  
His former strength and was baptised.  
Saint Paul is often criticised  
By modern people who’re annoyed  
At his conversion, saying Freud  
Explains it all. But they omit  
The really vital point of it,  
Which isn’t *how* it was achieved  
But what it was that Paul believed.  
He knew as certainly as we  
Know you are you and I am me  
That Christ was all he claimed to be.  
What is conversion? Turning round  
From chaos to a love profound.  
And chaos too is an abyss  
In which the only life is this.

Such a belief is quite all right  
If you are sure like Mrs Knight  
And think morality will do  
For all the ills we're subject to.  
But raise your eyes and see with Paul  
An explanation for it all.  
Injustice, cancer's cruel pain.  
All suffering that seems in vain,  
The vastness of the universe,  
Creatures like centipedes and worse –  
All part of an enormous plan  
Which mortal eyes can never scan  
And out of it came God to man.  
Jesus is God and came to show  
The world we live in here below  
Is just an antechamber where  
We for His Father's house prepare.  
What is conversion? Not at all  
For me the experience of St Paul,  
No blinding light, a fitful glow  
Is all the light of faith I know  
Which sometimes goes completely out  
And leaves me plunging round in doubt

Until I will myself to go  
And worship in God's house below –  
My parish Church – and even there  
I find distractions everywhere.

What is conversion? Turning round  
To gaze upon a love profound.  
For some of us see Jesus plain  
And never once look back again,  
And some of us have seen and known  
And turned and gone away alone,  
But most of us turn slow to see  
The figure hanging on a tree  
And stumble on and blindly grope  
Upheld by intermittent hope.  
God grant before we die we all  
May see the light as did St Paul.

John Betjeman

## A Child's Christmas in Wales

... And I remember that we went singing carols once, when there wasn't the shaving of a moon to light the flying streets. At the end of a long road was a drive that led to a large house, and we stumbled up the darkness of the drive that night, each one of us afraid, each one holding a stone in his hand in case, and all of us too brave to say a word. The wind through the trees made noises as of old and unpleasant and maybe webfooted men wheezing in caves. We reached the black bulk of the house.

"What shall we give them? Hark the Herald?"

"No," Jack said, "Good Kind Wenceslas. I'll count three."

One, two, three, and we began to sing, our voices high and seemingly distant in the snow-felted darkness round the house that was occupied by nobody we knew. We stood close together, near the dark door.

*Good Kind Wenceslas looked out  
On the Feast of Stephen....*

And then a small, dry voice, like the voice of someone who has not spoken for a long time, joined our singing: a small, dry, eggshell voice from the other side of the door: a small, dry voice through the keyhole. And when we stopped running we were outside our house; the front room was lovely; balloons floated under the hot-water-bottle-gulping gas; everything was good again and shone over the town.

"Perhaps it was a ghost," Jim said.

"Perhaps it was trolls," Dan said, who was always reading.

"Let's go in and see if there's any jelly left," Jack said. And we did that.



Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang “Cherry Ripe”, and another uncle sang “Drake’s Drum”. It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got onto the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird’s Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed. Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-covered snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steady falling night. I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.

Dylan Thomas



### Ring out Wild Bells

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more,  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out thy mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson





ZANE does an excellent job for the people of Zimbabwe. I wish the charity really well in 2016.

**Rt Hon David Cameron MP**

Prime Minister



ZANE is one of the most impressive charities I have seen. The charity provides practical support to the most vulnerable people and does so in a way that caters for their mental and physical needs. ZANE has a dedicated team which focuses on building relationships. ZANE staff ensure that every penny raised is used to deliver results.

**HE Catriona Laing CB**

UK Ambassador to Zimbabwe



The people of Zimbabwe have so very little to be thankful for, but the great work done by ZANE is bringing relief and improved health to many who had no hope for a better tomorrow. Organizations such as ZANE are critical in providing assistance to those in need.

**US Ambassador James D McGee (Ret)**



ZANE does invaluable, literally lifesaving work in Zimbabwe in providing essential support for those who can no longer help themselves - especially amongst our senior citizens. As ZANE extends its fundraising activities to Australia, I am pleased to endorse the importance of its work and guarantee

that the money raised goes where it is needed most. I encourage fellow Australians to support them generously.

**Matthew E K Neuhaus**

Australian Ambassador, Australian Embassy, Zimbabwe

# Reasons to



ZANE's work in Zimbabwe quite simply provides a lifeline to those who are least able to help themselves. Their committed, inspirational team works hard to ensure that every penny raised goes to where it is needed most.

## **HE Deborah Bronnert CMG**

Former UK Ambassador to Zimbabwe, 2011-2014



ZANE's work in Zimbabwe provides an essential lifeline of support for those who cannot help themselves. It is a wonderful charity and the money goes where it's needed.

## **Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick CBE**

Chairman, ZANE Council of Reference



I have seen a little bit of ZANE's work on the ground and from what I have seen it is very, very impressive . . . ZANE is one of those lovely organisations that make a little bit of money go a long, long way. ZANE is a good cause and the

money is properly and well spent.

## **John Simpson CBE**

World Editor of the BBC

- 1** ZANE builds a personal relationship with every one of the 2,600 elderly, often very lonely, people to whom we give aid, support and encouragement. Only those really in need of assistance receive it.
- 2** ZANE provides the only social services network in Zimbabwe. Where help for the poverty-stricken is needed, ZANE staff draw support from a range of sources, including family members in Zimbabwe and overseas.
- 3** Donors are able to choose which aspect of ZANE's mission they plan to support.
- 4** Recently ZANE was the Telegraph Group Overseas Charity of the year.
- 5** ZANE is in effective partnership with all the relevant UK Services charities. Since 2004, ZANE has distributed over £2.2m in grants to war veterans and their widows in Zimbabwe.

**If you want to save a life**

# support ZANE

**6** ZANE runs micro-finance and training initiatives to enable self-help businesses and food production in impoverished communities in Zimbabwe.

**7** ZANE funded the first clubfoot correction programme in Zimbabwe. Five treatment centres have been established and are transforming the lives of 300 children each year.

**8** ZANE receives no aid from the government and relies wholly on support from private donors.

**9** An independent consultancy investigated ZANE and the report stated: “The charity thrives on its responsiveness, flexibility and lack of bureaucracy. Operationally ZANE is frugal, focused and effective in delivering aid to the needy.”

then please support ZANE



ZANE is really in touch with the people it assists . . . ZANE’s work is wonderfully moving . . .

## **John Humphrys**

Author, journalist,  
radio & TV presenter



ZANE is an extraordinary charity set up by inspiration . . . I have been enormously impressed by the vision, the hard work and the unquenchable spirit of everyone I have met.

## **The Rt Revd John Pritchard**

Former Bishop of Oxford



I am deeply impressed with the work of ZANE; one of those charities that make a little money go a long way.

## **Baroness Royall of Blaisdon**

Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords



*What a difference your donation makes!*



**Zimbabwe A National Emergency**

You can make a donation by phone or online  
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