## Diocesan Link with Mzimbuvu, South Africa

The link between the Diocese of Truro and the Diocese of Mzimvubu (previously known as Umzimvubu) dates back to about the year 2000, when an initial visit was made by the then Bishop of St Germans and others. Mzimvubu is situated in South Africa, in the old Transkei region, to the south west of Durban. It is a rural, hilly region with a long history of considerable poverty. The majority of the population speak Xhosa, though many people also speak English and/or Afrikaans.

Early visits highlighted the widespread level of poverty among the largely black population, and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS has resulted in many orphans, either cared for by grandparents or left to fend for themselves. As a result, several projects were identified by Truro Diocese and monetary assistance provided to them. In particular, the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) project has been running for many years, and a number churchgoers from around Cornwall still subscribe regular amounts to help provide meals for these children, distribute food parcels to families or make essential school uniforms available.

Donations were sent out to the organiser of the OVC project roughly every quarter for many years. However, over more recent years, there was much controversy surrounding the leadership of the diocesan Bishop Mlibo Ngewe, who was eventually removed from office. The management of the OVC project was transferred to the diocesan office and it was impossible for us to receive information about its running. Reluctantly, the transfer of OVC donations to Mzimvubu ceased from 2018.

**Mzimvubu today**

Thankfully, circumstances appear to be changing for the diocese. A personal visit by one of the TDIL committee members in late 2019 made links with a previous organiser of the OVC project. Bishop Tsietse Seleoane was installed as their new bishop on 1 February 2020. Bishop Philip has since made contact with him, and they both wish to re-establish the link between our two dioceses. Once we are assured about the satisfactory running of the project, we hope to resume sending regular donations to support this vital work.

Although financial support is important, there are other aspects of a link that we would wish to develop. One of our Church of England primary schools has already expressed a wish to link with the St Monica’s Diocesan School in Matatiele. Parishes or deaneries may wish to link with parishes in Mzimvubu to develop relationships and provide mutual spiritual support. As we encourage two-way communication, we can learn more about each other, share our prayer requests and pray for each other and our respective projects.