

A Reconstruction of Matthew Jacha Rusike's Contribution to the Re-humanisation of Dehumanised Children in Zimbabwe 1950–1978

Martin Mujinga

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8098-2515>

University of South Africa

martinmujinga@gmail.com

Abstract

The Mathew Rusike Children's Home (MRCH) in Zimbabwe is known for its philanthropic work of caring for orphans and vulnerable children. It is an institution viewed as a Christ-woven nest that re-humanises dehumanised children. This paper was motivated by the fact that, over the years, the MRCH has attracted partners and supporters locally and globally, thereby giving it international status. However, there is a gap in research that connects the founder, Rev. Matthew Jacha Rusike, and the institution. The gap is worrisome, because Rusike has been a pioneer in the history of Methodism in a number of ways. To start with, he was the first African Wesleyan Methodist minister to be appointed as circuit superintendent in a missionary-dominated church. Second, he was awarded the "Member of the Order of the British Empire" for his contribution to the formation of the first African children's home in a country whose cultural values denied the existence of orphanages. Third, he also supervised many schools; and yet there is little research about him. The other motivation for this study was to reconcile the historical Rusike and the institution. The paper concluded that Rusike had challenged the African epistemology that orphans and vulnerable children are the responsibility of relatives—even if those homes are not safe for children. The paper starts by discussing the personal life of Rusike, followed by a description of his ministerial journey; how he founded the children's home, and how the home developed from a family vision to be the church's Christian social responsibility.

Keywords: Matthew Rusike Children's Home; reconstruction; orphans; re-humanisation; dehumanisation; vulnerable children



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Introduction

The relationship of Rev. Matthew Jacha Rusike with the Matthew Rusike Children's Home (MRCH) is not very clear to many people in general, and in particular to members of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ), who own the home. Although the home's name points to the founder, there are significant historical misconnections resulting in the identity and role of Rusike being blurred by the institution. Established in 1950, over the years MRCH has gained international recognition with friends in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Despite this profound name of the institution, there has not been much scholarly attention given to connect its historical life to its founder, Matthew Jacha Rusike (Gondongwe 2011, 234). In Africa, it is considered a disgrace for any family to ignore orphans left by their relatives. Rusike kept orphans and vulnerable children in his own home, using his meagre resources during the colonial era (Banana 1996). The selected time frame of 1950–1978 covers the period when the orphanage was founded and the year it was renamed MRCH. The paper was motivated by the need to reconcile the historical Rusike and the institution. It concludes by arguing that Rusike rose against all odds, and he remains the voice of an African minister who challenged the African epistemology that orphans and vulnerable children are the responsibility of relatives—even if those homes are not safe for children. He also defied African philosophy, which asserts that raising someone who is not your relative, is unAfrican.

Methodology

Historical reconstruction has been chosen as the methodology to explain the puzzling extant traces, often in the absence of extensive and repeatable observations (Forber and Griffith 2011, 1). The task of historical reconstruction involves crafting a causal etiology for a specific event or a set of events. It also provides both chronology and history. Chronology identifies the sequence of events, whereas history identifies the causal links and processes connecting events across time (Forber and Griffith 2011, 2). Data for this historical reconstruction were gathered through primary and secondary sources. Primary sources used, were structured and open-ended interviews and archives. Interviews were conducted using random and snowball sampling. Random sampling focused on people who were known to be related to Rusike, namely Andrew Rugwete, Gwendoline Rusike, Mavis Rusike, and Abbey Rusike. These participants chain referenced other people who were closer to the events surrounding the establishment of the MRCH. According to Donalek (2004, 24), “chain referencing is used where potential participants are hard to locate.” These participants were Robin Garise, Gertrude Chirima, two males and two females above the age of 75 from the Makwiro Circuit where Rusike had worked for 20 years.

In addition, the research used MCZ archives. Denis and Ntsimane (2008) define archival research as involving primary sources held in archives, special collections libraries or other repositories. MCZ archives contain all minutes and account books relating to trust, conferences, districts, circuits or society affairs, as well as personal files of church

workers when no longer needed for current reference in the conduct of business (MCZ 2007, 33). MCZ archives had been kept since 1891. The major focus in the archives centred around the minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod (that discussed and made resolutions on the development of the MRCH), as well as the personal file of Rusike. The archival material was gathered after getting the permission of the MCZ. Secondary sources included written literature on the history of the MRCH and limited scholarly information about Rusike. The discussion will begin by discussing Rusike's early life.

Recounting Matthew Jacha Rusike's early life

Born on 31 January 1896, Matthew Jacha Rusike was the first of four children in the family of Jacha Rusike and Varaudzi Mbiza. He was followed by twins Aaron and Petiwa, and the last born Zekia (Interview Rugwete 2019). Jacha was one of the early converts at Epworth Mission (Weller and Linden 1984, 92). The cultural taboos associated with the birth of twins brought enmity to Jacha and Varaudzi, as they were regarded as social misfits. During those days, twins were killed according to the African culture, but Jacha was encouraged by Rev. John White to keep the children. One night their house was set on fire and no one knew anything about the cause of the fire. The following day, Jacha moved to the other side of Epworth farm and built his home there, but no one from the village could visit him because he had not killed one of the twins, having been instructed not to do so by a white missionary (Matthew Rusike Obituary n.d.).

Matthew went to Epworth Primary School in Salisbury (Harare). His father was too poor to send him to a boarding school at Nenguwo Training Institute¹ (Peaden 1973, 74). Rusike later married Rebecca and the two were blessed with seven children, namely Silvia, Bonnie, Dorothy, Freda, Agrrey, Caleb and Patricia (Interview Rusike and Rusike 2020). Rebecca was the first African Ruwadzano circuit president² (Ranger 1995, 43). She died in 1951 while they were in Marshal Hartley-Makwiro Circuit. Ranger (1995, 43) mentions that when Rebecca died, she had an obituary of praise in the *African Weekly Newspaper*, more than was accorded the death of most well-known men. Rebecca's funeral was attended by over 2 000 people and the eulogy described her as a "classical minister's wife." Rusike later married the younger sister of his wife, called Jessica Mukasa, who had her own child, Andrew Rugwete. Matthew and Jessica had no child together (Interview Rugwete 2019).

In 1911, Rusike went to Nenguwo Training Institute to train as a teacher but he had no money to pay the fees (Interview Chirima 2020). According to Peaden (1973, 75), "in

1 Nenguwo Training Institute is the present-day Waddilove Institute, which has a primary school, high school, school for the blind, and a farm. The name Nenguwo was changed to Waddilove Institute in 1915, when Sir Joshua Waddilove donated the sum of £1 500 towards infrastructural development at Nenguwo Training Institute (Gondongwe 2011, 68).

2 Ruwadzano circuit president is the wife of the circuit superintendent.

his first entry into Nenguwo Training Institute in February 1911, Matthew was just 15 and was the youngest of the first 29 students in residence” (Interview Rugwete 2019; Zvobgo 1991, 117). Between 1900 and 1911 the Institute had 74 African students and a number of them came from Epworth. Jonas Chihota (the son of headman Chiremba, the traditional African healer who converted to a Wesleyan Methodist during its early days) (Gundani 2007; Thorpe 1951), was the first to go to Nenguwo Training Institute (Peaden 1973, 73). Other people who enrolled at Nenguwo Training Institute between 1909 and 1911 were Manasseh and Simon, the sons of Jonas Chihota. The other three, who did not come from the family of the headman, were Kuni Ndemera (1909), Farai Chitsvatsva (1910) and Matthew Rusike.

Rusike managed to pay for his education by working part time. Peaden (1973, 75) highlights that “in most mission centres, people were nominated to get sponsorship to go to Nenguwo Training Institute which also attracted people as far as the Cape Colony.” In a number of cases, only married men with children got the chance to be nominated. In such cases, the wife and the children would accompany the father to the mission. Since Rusike was not married, he could not qualify to be nominated. At Nenguwo he was engaged by the governor of the institute, the Rev. Avon Walton, and was allowed to attend lessons during the night and spend the whole day working for his fees. Out of the 74 students who trained at Nenguwo Training Institute between 1900 and 1911, 50 qualified as teachers or teacher-evangelists and went into the service of the church. After qualifying as a teacher in 1915, Rusike worked as an evangelist until 1926 when he started to study for the ministry.

Rusike’s Call and Vocation in the Wesleyan Methodist Church

Rusike was accepted as a candidate for ministry, having applied from Gatooma (now Kadoma) Circuit in 1928 (Gondongwe 2011, 93). Upon his candidature, he was sent back to Waddilove for ministerial formation. Rusike continued as a student until 1932. His studies as a probationer had been consistently good. He took English as an optional subject for four years and gained an average of 65%. His average percentage in Biblical studies and Theology over five years was 75.4%. This was a first class pass (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1932, 23). Rusike was ordained in 1933. His superintendent, Rev. Frank Mussel, reported:

I have found during 1932 the Rev. M. J. Rusike to be an enthusiastic and loyal colleague ready to assist at all times in the governing of Epworth Circuit. His work in Salisbury is to be highly commended and the fact that he is sought after consistently by Government Department and officials for guidance on native matters shows the value they place upon him. In all business, and money matters, I have found Mr Rusike to be efficient and accurate. I would urge that his next Superintendent makes sure that he does not overdo things in his zeal for this work. I have no hesitation in proposing that the Rev. M. J. Rusike be received in full connexion. (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1933, 29)

From the superintendent's report, it is clear that Rusike was hardworking, intelligent, honest, accountable and passionate about his work, so that even colonial government sought guidance on the life of the natives from him. In 1936, he was appointed superintendent of Makwiro Circuit, making him the first African Wesleyan Methodist minister to be appointed to such a post (Gondongwe 2011, 93; Weller and Linden 1984, 60; Zvobgo 1996, 342). As a superintendent, Rusike served under the leadership of Rev. Frank Noble, who was the president of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia Synod from 1927 to 1938 (Mujinga 2017, 162). One of the serious challenges in ministry during the colonial era was the inequality between the missionaries and the African ministers. Banana (1996) mentioned that, in this predicament, one of the victims was Rusike who distinguished himself as a capable African minister with great leadership potential. The laudable commitment to African superintendence was marred by this unsavoury tradition of treating black and white ministers differently in economic terms. African ministers were subservient to their European superintendents, who accepted that blacks were inferior to whites (Gondongwe 2011, 247).

It can be argued that Rusike's appointment as superintendent had come because of three reasons. First, he was articulate and outspoken on matters of inequality. Gondongwe (2011) emphasises how African ministers had fought for their rights. In this work, he highlights the vocal language of Rusike during and after retirement. Some of the correspondences accessed in his personal file are a case in point. There were appeals by African ministers concerning salary discrepancies and inequitable distribution of resources; appeals for help with the education of children; and some letters that requested assistance to cover medical bills. On 15 April 1971, Rusike wrote to the district chairperson of Rhodesia, Rev. Andrew Ndhlela (now Presiding Bishop), expressing his frustration with regard to his pension funds. The letter reads:

I think you remember that during the last two years, I asked you many times about African ministers' provident fund. Your answer was that you are writing to the Mission House and [would] ask for £2000 and when you got the money you would invest it and then use the interest to pay the supernumerary ministers. Every time I tried to talk to you about it, your answer has been that you are dealing with the Mission House. A few weeks ago I received the lowest amount that has ever been paid to any African minister in the district. This was £67.50 per year. I do not think there is any minister that ever received an amount as low as that. This is lower than what ordinary workers get per week or what a new farm boy gets per month. (Rusike 1971)

This letter shows how Rusike bravely expressed himself on matters pertaining to his welfare and that of fellow African ministers.

Second, Rusike's appointment came after Rev. Frank Noble had realised his gifted leadership and recommended him for the post. For Noble, it was good to give African ministers pastoral responsibilities over respective circuits, while European missionaries remained in charge of the administration of the educational programmes (Hallencrutz 1998, 89).

Third, during his days at Makwiro, Rusike was appointed by the Education Department to be the superintendent of schools; the first in the colony to attain this post (Weller and Linden 1984, 92). This government position proved the competency of Rusike. While at Makwiro, he had many responsibilities; socially, ecclesiastically and in the colonial civil government. He explained that “when I was at Marshal Hartley, I was principal of a boarding school, a minister in charge of churches and superintendent of 22 schools” (Rusike cited in Richardson 1960, 194–95). In 1936, the *Bantu Mirror* hailed the Rhodesian Methodist Synod for making history by appointing Rusike as the first black circuit superintendent and by admitting Esau Nemapare, Thompson Samkange and Simon Chihota into full ministry. This was greatly appreciated by all Africans as proof of alertness of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to the aspirations of the Africans and their possibilities (Ranger 1995, 6).

Rusike served in Makwiro Circuit from 1936–1956. According to his obituary, he expanded the Zvimba communal area both religiously and educationally. Given his good work in Makwiro, the missionaries were convinced that the act of placing circuits under African ministers was justified (Zvobgo 1991, 118). In time, Rev. Thompson Samkange was appointed deputy superintendent in Kwenda Circuit, while Rev. Esau Nemapare was appointed in Shabani Circuit (Banana 1996, 81). Rusike served as a Wesleyan Methodist for 32 years.³ In his ministry, Rusike had a lot of frustrations not possible to pursue in this paper. However, it is important to note that, although he did not have significant wealth, he wrote a “last will” dated 19 September 1977, which was deposited with Sawyer and Mkushi Legal Practitioners for safety (Rusike 1977). The will expressed his love for both his family and his church. He appointed the native commissioner to be the executor of his will. His estate was divided into three: 1) his wife and girl children; 2) his three boys; and 3) the farm was apportioned to the eldest son and his descendants. He wrote that:

1) I bequeath half of my estate excluding immovable property to be shared in equal shares, share and share alike absolutely between my wife Jessica Rusike and my daughters Silvia Pasi, Dorcas Mtete, Freda Rusike and Patricia Rusike. 2) I bequeath the other half of my estate excluding immovable property to be shared in equal shares, share and share alike absolutely between my sons Abiatha Benjamin Rusike, Agrrey Rusike, and Caleb Rusike. 3) My farm number 21 Marirangwe A.P. Area Salisbury District and buildings therein to be taken over by my eldest son Abiatha Benjamin Rusike, on condition that my wife and any other member of my family be allowed to live there

3 1929–1935 Salisbury Circuit (Chipembi area) Epworth while in training; he also worked with Rev. John White in Nenguwo Circuit, working at Mureverwi Society together with Rev. Kasin Gazi. He also worked in Waterfalls in Salisbury and Kadoma. From 1936–1956 he worked in Makwiro Circuit with Michael Chidarikire in 1955, who was stationed in Chikaka. From 1957–1959 Rusike worked at Kwenda Circuit with Rev. Donald Robinson, who was superintendent, Jonah Patsika stationed in Gunde, Nason Zaba (Chideme) and Rev Graaff who was a supernumerary. In 1960 he was in Epworth Circuit. He retired from active ministry in 1961. From 1961–1970 he was the superintendent/warden of African Children’s Home in Epworth and he retired in 1971. Between 1971–1977 he was at his farm in Marirangwe-Mhondoro. Upon his death, he was buried on Marirangwe farm.

during their lifetime. 4) On the death of my eldest son, the farm shall go to my eldest grandson and thereafter to my eldest grand grandson. He, my eldest grand grandson, if he so desires may sell the farm but the money as realised must be paid to the Methodist Church of Rhodesia for the benefit of African Education. (Gondongwe 2011, 235; Rusike 1977)

Having discussed the life history of Rusike, the next task is to examine how he started the orphanage. In doing this, the paper will start by describing the importance of the Zvimba communal area, where the idea started.

The Contribution of the Zvimba Communal Area to Early Methodism and MRCH

The idea of keeping orphans was birthed while Rusike was at Marshal Hartley in Makwiro Circuit. Makwiro Circuit is in the Zvimba communal area and is important for this study. First, the early pioneer work of Makwiro Circuit, formerly Hartleyton, was started by Isaac Shimmin, one of the first missionaries who came with Owen Watkins in 1891 (Zvobgo 1973, 73). On 2 December 1891, Shimmin, together with evangelist Roger Bowen, left for NemaKonde with the hope of finding a place for a farm. On 15 December 1891 they marked out the new mission farm, which they named “Hartley” in honour of Rev. Marshal Hartley, who was the secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in England (Gondongwe 2011, 49). In 1894, a new mission station was begun at Marshal Hartley farm (Thorpe 1951, 101) and in 1962, Moleli High School was established on this mission station.

Second, Hartleyton is the place where James Anta, the youngest of the 10 teacher-evangelist who came from South Africa with Isaac Shimmin and Owen Watkins, was martyred during the Shona Rebellion of 1886–87 (Thorpe 1951, 101). Anta had just finished his service with a congregation of 18 people when he was surrounded by armed rebels and speared to death. Since there was a shortage of European missionaries, no European was stationed in Hartleyton from 1897 until 1936, when Rusike was stationed there (Thorpe 1951). Rusike was stationed there 53 years after the martyrdom of an African evangelist. The Shona Rebellion, that claimed the life of Anta, also claimed the life of another teacher-evangelist from South Africa, Modumedi Moleli⁴ in Nenguwo (Zvogbo 1973, 63). Although Anta was the one martyred in Zvimba, when the Wesleyan Methodist Church established a secondary school for Marshal Hartley Primary in 1962, James Anta remained an unknown hero and the school was named after Moleli, who was martyred in Nenguwo. Up to the time of writing, the Wesleyan Methodist Church had not taken any initiative to remember the selfless service of James Anta.

4 Modumedi Moleli was killed by the Shona rebels in 1896 when he was trying to serve a white farmer called Mr James White. His wife tried to dissuade him but he said: “I am a Christian teacher and I must do what is right at all costs” (Thorpe 1951, 66).

The Birth and Development of the African Children's Home

The problem of orphans was a traditional African challenge caused by urbanisation (Weller and Linden 1984, 92). This rural-urban migration left most children vulnerable. Rusike started looking after orphans in 1950 in his own home, while serving in Makwiro. He started with one child from Umvuma (Mvuma), called Agnes Zvomuya (Interview Rusike and Rusike 2020). Agnes was a vulnerable child who had been abandoned by her parents. Richardson (1960, 194) presents how Rusike started to take care of orphans. He reported that:

There was a man who came from Portugal East Africa [Mozambique] who was working on the farms in Southern Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]. The man married a Shona woman in Umvuma. The couple started to fight because the husband was accusing the wife of infidelity. The woman ran away, leaving children. Agnes was picked up by police eating out of a refuse bin. She had had no food for several days. The girl was sent to Salisbury and the Social Welfare Department asked Rev. Herbert Carter⁵ if he could do anything to help. Carter suggested that the girl should be sent to the Rev. M. J. Rusike, who was the superintendent in Makwiro Circuit. Mr Rusike took the child into his own home and soon began the work taking care of orphans. (Richardson 1960, 194)

The Social Welfare Department requested the Wesleyan Methodist Church, through Rev. Carter, to take charge of the child. This request came in the context that the Social Welfare Department knew that the Wesleyan Methodist Church had once established an orphanage for destitute white children in 1921, called Rhodesia Children's Home (Harare Children's Home Constitution n.d.). The existence of Rhodesia Children's Home and its philanthropic work to only white orphans, could be argued to be one of the reasons that motivated Rusike to establish a home for vulnerable African children. It is important at this point to briefly relate the two children's homes, one meant for whites, and the other for blacks, to justify the establishment of the MRCH. Richardson recorded an account of Rusike explaining how he started to take care of the orphans. In his account, Rusike said:

I was then at Marshal Hartley where I was Principal of a Boarding School, Minister in Charge of Churches and Superintendent of 22 out-schools. Six months later, a girl was sent to me by the Social Welfare Department and several more came in the following months. When the number of children put in my care had so increased, I asked the Synod to give me less work in order that I could give more time to helping these neglected children. I was moved to Kwenda and I went there as assistant minister and had ten children to care for in my own home ... after 45 years of service as Evangelist and Minister in the Methodist Church, I retired from active ministry in order to give all the time of helping these children. I moved into the temporary buildings which have been put up for me at Epworth and have now sixteen children under my care and there are

5 Rev. Herbert Carter was the President of the Rhodesian Wesleyan Methodist Church between 1939–1954 (Mujinga 2017, 162).

several more on the waiting list but we have no room for them. (Rusike cited in Richardson 1960, 194–95)

Following the outbreak of the Spanish flue, the depression caused by post World War I, and the increased number of homeless children, in 1918, the Wesleyan Methodist Church championed the establishment of an orphan care programme (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1918). The home was established and all the preliminary work had been done in 1919. In 1920, the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia Synod received a recommendation from Rhodesia Children's Home requesting the home to be run ecumenically, given that there was no other home in Rhodesia. The recommendation reads:

The Committee of the Salisbury Branch of the Institution known as Rhodesia Children's Home is of the opinion that the Institution should be continued and carried on, on purely undenominational lines and basis. It therefore desires to inform the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia that henceforth the committee is preparing to relieve the said Synod of any future responsibility for the control of the Institution and is prepared with the funds of the equipment at present at the Committee's disposal to accept sole responsibility in the matter and undertakes by personal endeavours and financial support to maintain the Institution. This Committee is prepared to draw up a Constitution and rules which will establish and regulate the Institution on an undenominational basis for popular interest and control. (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1920)

In the representative session of the synod, the recommendation was discussed and it was agreed to transfer the institution from a denominational orphanage to an ecumenical home (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1920, 45). The synod also came up with conditions to govern the home. It was agreed that, first the members of the Synod of 1920, who had resolved on the inauguration of the scheme, be life members of the General Committee of the Rhodesia Children's Home. Second, that churches established and organised in Rhodesia be invited to serve on the general committee on the basis of equal representation, control and responsibility. Third, that accredited organisations of approved status in this territory are accepted to apply for representation on the general committee (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1920, 45).

After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Rhodesia Children's Home was renamed Harare Children's Home; and this was confirmed by the Harare Children's Home Constitution. The Constitution confirms that the Wesleyan Methodist Church was the one that championed the idea of a children's home. The Constitution reads:

The Wesleyan Methodist Synod established the Harare Children's Home in 1919 after the 1919 Spanish flu epidemic and the post-World War I depression. ... A committee which comprised 15 ministers and lay people was chosen to come with a plan to house the children. The committee was chaired by Rev. Glyndr Davis. In January 1921, the

first General Meeting had been held and a Constitution was also drafted. On 4 July 1921, Rhodesia Children's Home was established. (Harare Children's Home Constitution n.d.)

The brief history of Rhodesia Children's Home given above, shows that destitute white children had a safe place to be kept, while Africans did not. In addition, Rusike knew about the home and he might probably have been challenged to leave African destitutes to remain in that condition. Moreover, it can be argued that, since the early life of Rusike was characterised by poverty to the extent of funding his own education at Nenguwo Training Institute, he understood the pain of such a life and would not wish anyone to experience it. Likewise, Rev. Carter's reaction, to take the child to Rusike in Marshal Hartley without his consent, can be understood as showing either trust in Rusike, racist tendencies, or abuse of the cleric's (Rusike) private life.

From 1950 to 1958 Rusike singlehandedly kept the orphans. Most people regarded the orphans as "*nherera dzaRusike*" (Rusike orphans). In 1958, the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia Synod changed the scope and direction of the orphanage because Rusike was going to retire in 1960. The synod felt bad that he was going to take 16 children with him to his farm in Marirangwe. According to Chirima (Interview 2020), it was possible that Rusike was prepared to take the children to Marirangwe because each time the missionaries saw him coming, they would say, "here comes the beggar." Richardson comments that it was possible that the group of children would be scattered if this happened; the whole plan would be endangered, and so the church decided to build a temporary home which would accommodate Rusike and "his flock" for one or two years (Richardson 1960, 193). The reference to "his flock" by Richardson justifies how Rusike was stigmatised for his philanthropic work.

The Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia Synod of 1958 made a number of recommendations regarding the orphanage. First, the synod agreed that the home should be built at Epworth to take up the work done by Rusike in his own home. Second, the synod agreed to name the orphanage African Children's Home (Richardson 1960, 193). Third, it was recommended that Rusike should be awarded the "Member of the Order of the British Empire"⁶ (MBE) by Queen Elizabeth II for establishing the home (Rusike 1977). The synod of 1959 accepted the plans and estimated costs for the home. Synod also re-appointed a committee to take charge of the affairs of the orphanage. Appeals were made to Beit Trustees and several companies and trusts in the country. However, there was no hope that money would be available by the end of 1959. The District had no money to borrow so that Rusike and his children could be brought from Kwenda to Epworth (Richardson 1960, 193).

6 The Order of the British Empire recognises distinguished service to the arts and sciences, public services outside the civil service and work with charitable and welfare organisations of all kinds. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100327214051/http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/Honours/OrderoftheBritishEmpire.aspx>.

Rusike was stationed at Kwenda Circuit in 1957, and the number of children steadily increased (Interview Garise 2020). The fathers of most of these children came from Nyasaland (Malawi), Portugal East Africa, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and the Union of South Africa and other parts of Southern Rhodesia. These fathers would have come looking for work in the new industries and they would end up marrying, and later leaving their wives (Rusike cited in Richardson 1960, 195). Some fathers died and left their children without knowing their proper identity; and social welfare referred them to Rusike. Rusike confessed that in 10 years of keeping children in his home, more than had 30 passed through his hands. Four of them were married and had their families and they looked at Rusike and his wife as their parents (Richardson 1960, 195). Rusike took care of the education and medical needs of these children. He would invite nurses and doctors to attend the sick while those of school-going age attended lessons at Epworth Primary School.

By 1960, African Children's Home had 30 children: five from Nyasaland; seven from Portuguese East Africa; four from Northern Rhodesia; two from South Africa; and 12 from other parts of southern Rhodesia (Rusike cited in Richardson 1960, 195). Rusike proved to be a father to these vulnerable children. Richardson cited Rusike as saying;

In 10 years, five of the children put in my care did not like to stay with me and were not willing to be obedient or to attend school every day and in each case the failure was because they were sent to me too late. "This is another reason why I want larger buildings so that I can take more children, for there are more, many more who are in need." (Richardson 1960, 195)

The retirement of Rusike and the project that he had started made it challenging for the church to ignore the initiative. In a short time, the building inspector was brought to Epworth; Kimberley bricks were made and building materials for classes of the Epworth Primary School were purchased. By the end of January 1960, a three-roomed house and four round huts were put up and roofed. Rusike and his wife moved into these houses in February 1960 with their 16 children, and the African Children's Home was established (Richardson 1960, 193).

The biggest challenge was finance. Beit Trustees promised £1 000; the Government promised £1 200; Epworth Ruwadzano £20.00 (Rea, Mountifield, and Richardson 1960, 75). In the *Quarterly Review* of the Methodist Church of September 1960, Rea et al. (1960) reported how the number of children had grown to 25. Two of the children were taken from Kariba. Their father had been arrested for alleged criminal activities. His wife ran away. The man was sentenced to two years in prison and there was no-one to take care of the children. The other four children came from Harare. Their mother had a wound in the head and was taken to hospital. Her condition did not show signs of improving and the children were taken to the African Children's Home (Rea et al. 1960, 75).

In 1960, the church was in full control of the home and it engaged the government for assistance. They were given £24.00 per child per annum from the government for maintenance (Rea et al. 1960, 75). Given the demands of the children's health, education and social life in general, the money was not enough. The home requested an extra £30.00 for each child, which they were granted. Other funds were received from different church organisations like Salisbury Ruwadzano £30.00, Epworth Ruwadzano £4.00, and Salisbury Women's Association £2.00 (Rea et al. 1960, 76). There were also donations received from Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith, members of parliament, and business firms, among other donors. In the end the home was looking forward to receiving £5 000. Other fundraising efforts were conducted by Rusike through a Christmas appeal for the gift of toys, clothes and sweets, so that the children would have a better Christmas (Rea et al. 1960, 76). The Christmas activities included the Christmas story so that the home would take the place of the parents who were not there to share love with their children during Christmas time (Rea et al. 1960, 76).

After his retirement in 1960, Rusike became the first superintendent/warden of the African Children's Home until 1970. Although he was now a supernumerary, his heart remained attached to the life of the home. In his letter of 6 October 1966 to Rev. H. O. Morton, the secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society in Britain, Rusike reported about the developments at the home, and mentioned how he wished to progress when he eventually went to his retirement home in Marirangwe. Morton responded:

I am glad that the news of the home remains good despite all the present problems which must make it extremely difficult for you to get the support that you need ... I realize that you are anxious to hand on the burden and I hope Mr Ndhlela is able to advise the Synod to accept responsibility for the home so that you may feel its future is secure. The church is very thankful for all the efforts you did for the home. (Morton 1966)

Rusike died in 1977 and Rev. John Jabangwe was appointed as the warden. The Rhodesia Synod that sat from 31 August to 1 September 1978 at Main Street in Bulawayo, and received a recommendation from the African Children's Home to rename the orphanage in honour of Rusike. The resolution was accepted and the home changed its name to Matthew Rusike Children's Home (Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Rhodesia District Synod 1978, 207). The synod (now Conference) also accepted that all committees should align MRCH activities with the Deed of Church Order and Standing Orders, which is the policy book of the church. In 1979 there were 59 children in the home. The name of the committee was also changed to Board of Governors and the Constitution of the home was also accepted.⁷

7 By 2020, the Home would house 100 children below 18 years at a time and had moved from dormitories to family units with foster parents. There were also other homes at Donga in Shurugwi, Midlands Province and Mzinyathi in Matebeleland South.

Conclusion

Although the reconstruction of Rusike had not been given much attention, this remarkable man has a number of things to be remembered for in the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. First, he was one of the youngest students at Nenguwo Training Institute who trained by funding himself. Second, he was the first African minister to be appointed superintendent in a missionary-dominated church. Third, he was the first African minister to establish an orphanage in his home for 10 years without coordinated assistance. Fourth, he was the first African minister to be given the responsibility of supervising schools by the colonial government. Fifth, he was one of the first African ministers to purchase a farm in Marirangwe. Sixth, he was the first African minister to write a will and appointed the Native Commissioner to be the executor of his will. The Native Commissioner was a political appointee. Rusike broke the African philosophy which asserts that a will and inheritance are oral testaments to be executed by relatives. In African culture only traditional chiefs could intervene and adjudicate whenever there were dilemmas or quarrels to be solved, be it in families or in society. Rusike's action was a taboo during his time. In this will, he included his daughters during a time when African patriarchal domination was rife. This action was believed to be unAfrican because daughters were not to be inheriting their father's estate. In addition, Rusike prescribed what should happen to his estate for the next three generations. Only then the farm would be sold, and even at that late stage the proceeds would have to be given to the Methodist Church. This practice was common among Europeans, not among Africans. In African culture, one can only bequeath some material things to one's relatives, but not to strangers or institutions. The MRCH still speaks loud about the works of an intelligent, humble, illustrious and compassionate Methodist minister. This reconstruction reconnects the lost identity of a humble man whose name is carried by an international institution.

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