

Rooted in Jesus Conference Report

Diocese of Muhabura, Uganda, July 2009

Revd John Lee, team leader, July 2009

Following the Kumi conference in 2006 Jenny Green had proposed to Bishop Cranmer Mugisha – Bishop of Muhabura – that Rooted in Jesus could be good for his diocese. Jenny is a CMS mission partner in Kisoro which is the main town of the diocese. She has been there for around 15 years and is a key member of the Bishop's senior staff.



Kisoro is about 12 hours by road from Kampala. It is the south west of Uganda very close to the borders with Rwanda and Congo. Events in these countries impact on Kisoro – particularly in terms of refugees and other casualties of past and present conflicts.

Kisoro is also a tourist destination for people coming to see the gorilla population in the forests and mountains of the area. It is, however, a very poor area much neglected by central government. The area is mountainous [Muhabura is an extinct volcano] and in places very beautiful. When Churchill called Uganda 'The Jewel of Africa' he was looking at the scenery around Kisoro.

The Diocese of Muhabura has had a very troubled recent history. There were deep and sometimes violent disagreements about who should be bishop for several years. The mission, ministry and finances of the diocese were crippled by these. When Claire Greaves and I visited briefly in 2006 we coincided with a delegation by Archbishop Henry and the other Diocesan Bishops. This aimed to bring reconciliation and new start. Following this Bishop Cranmer was appointed. He had previously been dean of the Cathedral. He and his wife, Hope, are remarkable people of faith, humility and intelligence. They are, as far as we can tell, widely respected, and life and energy is beginning to return to the diocese.

The conferences

We ran two conferences of two and a half days each and a half day explanation for the clergy of the diocese.

The first conference was in the northern part of the diocese around a town called in Iryaruvumba. It is the poorest part of a poor diocese. No electricity and little running water.

There were 33 residential delegates made up of lay leaders from the local parishes. Some full time, others volunteers. The Archdeacon – Christopher – attended most of the conference and has agreed to be the local coordinator.

The second conference was held in the Cathedral at Kisoro. Once again we asked the delegates to be residential and, after the first day, this was a great help to timekeeping. Again the delegates were drawn from lay staff and membership, the total being around 44. I think there were more full time lay workers at this conference – perhaps because the parishes at this conference were marginally better off than those in the Iryaruvumba. At the end of this conference the Bishop distributed the certificates and spoke and prayed. During this second conference the coordination structure was finalised. Jenny will be the diocesan coordinator but each archdeaconry will also have a coordinator.



Bishop Cranmer and Jenny asked us the offer the training to lay people rather than clergy. In-between the two conferences however the Bishop asked us to run a half day conference for the clergy of the diocese in order to describe the *Rooted in Jesus* idea. We did this through giving the introductory talk, running 15 min versions of each of the three seminars, asking Alfred to describe his experience in Zambia and taking questions.

Testimonies

Towards the end of each conference we asked people for testimonies about how they had been helped by the training and ministry. Responses included:

- *I didn't have strength but God strengthened*
- *Praying time helped me to remove the burden*
- *We have been sharpened to go and sharpen others*
- *Inviting the Holy Spirit in prayer has been helpful. I'm determined to share what I have learned.*
- *Love is all that matters and before I do anything I'll ask the Holy Spirit to lead*
- *One person said 'I asked myself what will I get out of this conference?' They came up with three things.*
 - *Be rooted in Jesus but if something is tying you ask others to help you in prayer.*
 - *The need for the work of the spirit because selfishness has been a problem.*
 - *The picture of the kettle – so that the word of God goes out to others.*
- *To invite the Holy Spirit at every prayer*
- *To grow roots in Jesus. I'm going to put into practice what I have learned*
- *Challenged about humility. I'm not going to be above others.*
- *To have firm foundations. We need to be examples to those we are leading*
- *Our church is going to change because our groups are going to grow roots in Jesus and others will tell others. I see our church becoming disciples*
- *The great commission has been renewed in me.*
- *I was not expecting to be a disciple who will make more disciples. I've been helped by the teaching on love shown and on unity and by the training on how we need to help others to grow roots in Jesus.*
- *I was delayed by a strike but God enabled me to come. I'm determined to deepen my roots in Jesus and to start a group to deepen roots in Christ.*
- *I have been helped. I'm challenged to change for the better. I've learned the value of humility.*
- *I also have learned something. I'm challenged to put into practice what I confess. Even when people are few I should press on.*
- *The time for prayer workshop was helpful. I learned the secret of power in prayer. I've learned that the work is not mine it is for the Lord Jesus.*
- *Challenged by the need for a time with the Lord before going to minister to others.*
- *I was fearful to start a group but I was encouraged by Timothy's life ministry.*
- *The challenge of patience was an encouragement. I have been encouraged that without their Bible a person can have scriptures via memory verses.*
- *Another challenge was the seating arrangement in a circle.*
- *The idea of praying in pairs was helpful. I've been strengthened in faith especially to be rooted in the love of Christ. I learned to listen to God after prayer. Many times I do not wait for God's answer.*
- *Humility and Love have been the key areas I need.*
- *I've learned more on the importance of Roots. If my roots are in Christ then I'll be firm.*
- *I've been encouraged to persist and persevere especially to be patient with those who grow cold or drift back.*

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