

Growing Disciples Rooted in Jesus

by Revd Sonja Arnold

When Bishop Jackson Nzerebende Tembo told members of his Diocesan mission team about his plan to introduce the “Rooted in Jesus” participatory small group discipleship programme into the Diocese of South Rwenzori, Uganda they knew that God had answered their prayers. Revd Captain James Tumwesigye and his colleague William Musisi had been praying about the need for discipleship across the Diocese, praying for the Spirit to reveal the strategic solution. It was therefore a very expectant, committed and enthusiastic team that welcomed our SOMA team to the Diocese in May 2008.

The team of Revd Stephen Dinsmore, Alex Scott and myself led three conferences, two in very rural areas in the breathtakingly beautiful South Rwenzori mountains and one in the cathedral town of Kasese. The clergy, senior lay reader and senior mission coordinator from each parish were invited by the Bishop. In all we were able to train and commission 150 people as leaders of “Rooted in Jesus” discipleship groups. Both the material and participatory method of leading the small groups was received enthusiastically. Its design allows for the material to be used in areas with low literacy rates, which is still the case in some rural areas in that region. At the end of each of the three conferences the delegates had begun the process of thinking and praying about who should be invited to the first of their groups. With the first part of the course translated into Lhukonzo, the delegates left the conference raring to go, with all they needed to begin!

As well as establishing “Rooted in Jesus” the conferences were a time of refreshing and renewal for many. We were deeply humbled to hear testimonies about how God had been touching lives and bringing conviction. In one, a woman publicly confessed that she had been contemplating committing suicide before the conference but God had intervened and had given her new hope. It was very moving to see the love and compassion shown to her by other leaders who immediately put into place follow up support.

As with so many SOMA conferences we too felt the gracious hand of the Lord upon us and the power of intercession supporting us during the whole trip. We praise God for sustaining and healing Revd Captain James’ wife Harriet through a bout of malaria which began the day we arrived and for the many unseen ways that God protected and guided us.

Planted by water

A recurring theme throughout the trip was Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17:7,8, the image of a tree planted by water, its roots going down deep so that there was fruit, even in times of hardship and trouble. This is our continued prayer for the people of the South Rwenzori Diocese and we look forward to seeing much more fruit in the years to come.

Sonja Arnold is an experienced SOMA Team Leader and lives in Bristol where she is involved with planting a Fresh Expression of church. This article first appeared in the SOMA newsletter ‘Sharing’.

Rooted in Jesus is a discipleship course edited by Alison Morgan and published by [ReSource](#). For more information on the course click [here](#).

