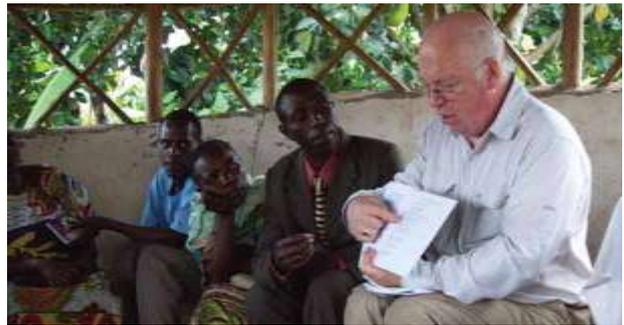


Rooted in Jesus in South Rwendzori, Uganda

Impressions : Mike Cotterell reflects on the second team visit to South Rwendzori, May 2009

Their 'I don't know what this is going to be like' expression soon gave way to sparkling eyed interest and engagement. The smiling increased as people soon settled. The 'this is going to be good' was spreading quickly amongst those who had come for the conference. The joy of the songs and the drum beat drew me into worship and immediately to these people in love and appreciation. Not knowing the meaning of the songs didn't matter as our worshippers joined us together in mutual love of Jesus.

The level of listening seemed Spirit-touched and deep. Then the time for prayer following the talk – everyone broke up into groups or remained alone to pray, reflecting on the challenge to holiness. And then they needed more time, they were soaking up time with God. None seemed disengaged, distracted or wanting to be doing something else. Just listening and praying; aware of his presence.



For many, Rooted in Jesus had been found to be effective and energising and they knew the Holy Spirit had been at work in their group. And those who had not started a group yet, knew it would work because of the enthusiasm of those who had. Good organisational skills, kindness and wisdom along with the burden to share Jesus were the hallmarks of the Diocesan leaders, like Revd Captain James, who enabled the mission locally. We found a serious desire to facilitate discipleship that would make others disciples as well – a simple New Testament plan was being implemented with the expectation that the Holy Spirit would work through them as they gave witness, prayed and loved the members of their small group.

Amid the many memories for me were the smiling welcoming face of people like William and Barnabas. The commitment of two young mothers who had brought their babies with them to the conferences. The singing and the drums enough to make you want to cry and dance. The Archdeacon's wife who worked so hard catering and who had a bad back, we prayed for her one night and she began to get better. Peeling potatoes with a carving knife – I had decided to help the cooks assistant and a child helper with their task and tell them a story – 'The Dog with no name, who had an itch'. (The Dog found Jesus, thanks to a cat who told him about Jesus, and then Jesus gave the Dog a name (Percy short for Perseverance) and his itch disappeared.)

Then there was the Pastor who told me of his outreach work to people by the lakeshore, many of whom had HIV and were addicts, we talked about ideas to help them earn a living and not return to their old lifestyles. Mention was made of 400 converts from Islam. At one longer seminar I thought everyone had had enough and I might be sharing things they already knew – but found out they wanted more and more and then had lots of questions.

What a joy it was to minister when everything seemed to count in some large way for those we had come to share with. Then came the text message of encouragement to the effect that what we were doing was like ripples going out on a pond, going further than we knew. We were just a small team, a small pebble dropped into a vast ocean – but God had already been at work and he was doing far more than we could ever think or imagine.

Nuts and bolts : Team Leader's report by Sonja Arnold

1. Introduction

This was the second Soma visit to South Rwendzori Diocese to introduce the *Rooted in Jesus* Programme. In May 2008, the first team had trained and commissioned 150 people to lead Rin J groups. The aims of this second mission were to 1) find out how they were progressing and to encourage them 2) enable participants to share experiences and encourage one another 3) train any new leaders of Rin J.

2. The Team

Revd Sonja Arnold – Team Leader; Mr Geoff Stokes (RinJ contributor); Revd Simon Brignall; Revd Mike Cotterill; Martin Mlaka (Church Army evangelist from Malawi). The UK team members were all experienced in leading *Rooted in Jesus* conferences - Sonja Arnold had been part of the earlier team to South Rwenzori, whilst both Geoff and Simon had led teams to introduce RinJ in DRC and Tanzania. Martin Mlaka is the RinJ co-ordinator in his Diocese and has had considerable experience of RinJ on the ground.

3. The Diocese

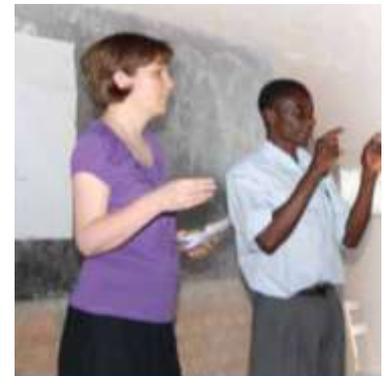
The Diocese, led by Rt Revd Jackson Nzerebende Tambo, is divided into 5 archdeaconries, Kisinga, Bwera, Kasese, Maliba and Rwesande. The first *Rooted in Jesus* conferences were held in Bwera, Maliba and Kasese, the second conferences were held in Kisinga, Kasese and Rwesande, so now each archdeaconry has hosted a RinJ conference. The responsibility for establishing and overseeing *Rooted in Jesus* lies with the Revd Capt James Tumwesigye and his assistants William Musisi and John. James is extremely able but somewhat overstretched in his responsibilities.

4. DRC representatives

Joining us on the first conference in Kisinga were a group of 5 DRC representatives from North Kivu Diocese, including Bwana Mzuri, the new coordinator for that diocese. Geoff will be returning to North Kivu Diocese with Don Brewin later this year.

6. The story so far

It was hard to get a clear idea of how many groups had started. It was clear, however, that despite the enthusiasm shown at the last conference there had been a slow start in establishing groups. Earlier this year the Mission team visited each area to re-envision them, causing some of the clergy to wake up, begin groups themselves or identify key lay leaders who were then trained to lead groups. As a result James is moving more towards a strategy of using lay people as group leaders. Martin Mlaka reported that a similar process had occurred in his Diocese where RinJ really began to take off once the lay people were more involved in leading.



Despite the slow start there was great enthusiasm both at the local co-ordinators meeting and at the conferences. It seems that once groups are started people quickly see the benefits. The following are some of the comments made about changes they had seen as a result of these groups

- Lives changed
- Material gives you time for reflection
- One group began overnight prayer meetings
- Groups are being asked to pray for the sick
- Helped us to understand the HS and what He does
- Seen changes in the parish
- Started a prayer meeting to pray for the problems and challenges in the area.
- Learnt how to ask God for their needs
- Group at a secondary school - some become Christians
- People are now reading the Bible for themselves- feel they really understand what they are reading.
- In a secondary school – 5 muslims converted to Christ
- Leaders consult the material for sermons
- Prayer groups developed in schools
- Memory verses - helpful for preaching.
- Helped my ministry as an evangelist
- One group member a muslim- he hadn't known who Jesus was, now he does and is telling his friends that Jesus is the right way.
- People are happy to know that God loves them and has a plan for them
- A lay reader repented of unforgiveness
- People are strengthened spiritually
- Couples repenting to each other
- People are reading the Bible
- People are learning to offer themselves and give to the church
- A Church Army capt discovered he had the gift of healing
- People learning to develop a spiritual life without resorting to divination
- Some charismatic groups felt superior- RinJ gives teaching on the Holy Spirit
- Zeal to go and witness
- Increasing time in prayer
- You get to know the problems of your people
- Increases our intimate fellowship
- You find there are other blessings- God provides- your animals multiply

7. The conferences

The team led 3 conferences in Kisinga (56 delegates), Kasese (61 delegates) and Rwesande (33 delegates). 100 of the total 150 delegates had not attended the first conference. Many of these new delegates were either in RinJ groups or were already leading groups having had some training from James.

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