

Rooted in Jesus Uganda March 2015

Once again it was a joy to be part of a Rooted in Jesus team to help develop active, effective, biblical and Spirit-filled faith in two African deaneries, this time in Uganda. Thank you for your support and prayers.

The Conferences

At each of the two three day conferences I was able to present one demonstration lesson, one teaching slot, three workshops and an early morning devotional. Andrew, Derreck, Judith and I were blessed in Kagadi with our main interpreter Alice, a local teacher, who was able to translate from English into Runyoro to the 160+ delegates.



Alice



Harriet, John, Joyce & Jennifer

One of the highlights for me in Kagadi was the daily skit about discipleship. Each sketch was performed by different churches and after their performances the delegates were asked for their comments. In the final skit, which was full of joy and laughter, it was noted that even 'satan' had been converted! Our host at St Luke's Church was Archdeacon Eric Twine whose wife Margaret was seriously ill after giving birth to their 6th child 3 weeks previously. Despite this he was with us throughout the conference encouraging everybody along the way.

On Saturday we travelled to our new base at Hoima. From here we were driven daily to the second conference which started on Monday in Bulindi. Here we met Joyce Asaba, the Diocesan coordinator. Joyce was to have been with us throughout the second conference, however she was unable to because of a family bereavement and she had to travel over 7 hours to be with her children whose father had died. All Saints Church, Hoima was bursting at the seams on Sunday morning with the 3 morning services congregations as well as 'collapsing' around their ears on inadequate foundations. The new building is nearing its completion and the old church will be demolished as they continue their ambitious reordering plans over the next 5 years.

The high spot of the second conference for me was on the first morning as I was leading the demonstration lesson: *Growing in Christ*. Having put people into small groups to talk about how being has Christian has changed us one lady said, 'To be honest I have never prayed to become a Christian.' When two other women started to laugh I said, 'This really isn't a laughing matter' to which they replied, 'We haven't prayed either.' Needing no second bidding I shared God's good news of what Jesus had done for them. Harriet, Jennifer and Joyce, knelt on the ground with me and prayed for Jesus to come into their lives as Saviour and Lord. My disappointment of not preaching on Sunday vanished. At the end of the conference Harriet told me 'I was sad, now I am happy.' Their vicar John was pleased too. At this second conference in Bulindi (60+ delegates) several people translated for us including Archdeacon Francis.

Dust, smoke, exhaust fumes and more fill the air where ever you travel in Africa. Some roads have tarmac but most don't. Frequent power cuts are par for the course for most days. But there is so much more to see, to hear, to sense, to smell and to taste in Uganda.

Other bits and pieces

The welcome from all, wherever we went, was so warm and demonstrative. Culturally women kneel down lower than you to greet you and when a frail 97 year old white haired lady knelt down before me to shake my hand as I sat in a chair in the family home, I wept.

Religion

One-third of the population is Roman Catholic, one-third is Protestant, and 16 percent is Muslim; 18 percent believe in local religions. World religions and local religions have coexisted for more than a century, and many people have established a set of beliefs about the nature of the universe by combining elements of both types. There were sizeable numbers of Sikhs and Hindus in the country until Asians were expelled in 1972 by Idi Amin, following an alleged dream, although many are now returning following an invitation from the new president, Yoweri Museveni.

Health

The World Health Organization places malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis as the top 3 threats to the health of Ugandans. I visited one hospital where one doctor cares for the sick of the local district with the support of midwives, pharmacists, nurses and other non medical staff. He proudly showed us his second hand ECG machine though it is only able to be used when they have sufficient rolls of ECG paper.

Housing

Many of the homes in rural Uganda that aren't mud and thatch are made of bricks made from the earth mounds produced by the ubiquitous African termite. Their red sticky soil is mixed with water; bricks are formed in wooden molds and then set out in the sun to dry. After that they are stacked up in a semi-pyramid, which is then covered with mud. Straw is piled on top. A fire is lit underneath, and when the straw starts to burn, the bricks are done. I saw these brick 'hives' again and again as I travelled across Uganda.



Brick Hive



Jackfruit

Food

One of my new taste sensations was Jackfruit. I like the description of Jackfruit by a friend from New Zealand. 'It looks like kiwi on steroids.' Some kiwi! Inside there are small sweet fruits with a large stone, like a date. Yum- yum; very tasty. Rice, Irish potato, Matooke(mashed plantain), ground nut sauce(purple & rough), pumpkin, cassava, sweet potato(white &heavy), stews of meat, chicken or fish, some fresh fruit became part of our daily diet both at lunch and at supper.

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