

Rooted in Jesus trip to Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese, Uganda

2nd to 12th March 2015

Team: Revd Andrew Petit, Revd Derreck Lee-Philpot, Hilary Buckingham, Judith Hogg

The team had been invited by Bishop Nathan of Bunyoro-Kitara diocese to come and take two conferences in the Diocese for the Kagadi and Bulindi Archdeaconries following on from two first-time conferences in November 2012. Andrew and Derreck had both been members of the November 2012 team which had been led by Revd John Lee. Originally, it had been hoped to lead these follow-up conferences early in 2014 but delays in having books 3 and 4 of the RinJ course translated had resulted in the conferences being postponed eventually for a whole year.

We were informed a few weeks before the conferences that about half the delegates at both conferences would be first-timers and so accordingly we planned for a 3 day mixed conference.

The Kagadi conference started on Wednesday 4th March. Initially, we had about 135 delegates, but this had grown to 187 by the 2nd day (12 priests, 32 lay readers, 20 catechists and 123 other lay church members). Of these only about 35 were returnees from the first conference. (51 had attended the original conference. Archdeacon Eric Twine said most of those who had not returned had moved out of the archdeaconry). A number of others had already been involved in RinJ groups. Whilst it was exciting to have so many, it meant that with only 4 on the team the demonstration RinJ lesson on the first day and the daily workshops had between 35 and 50 people in each group!

We were greatly impressed by the enthusiasm of the delegates especially amongst the 38 who came from the "home church" of St Lukes, Kagadi. During the first day they treated us to a traditional song & dance with words in praise of RinJ! Also, each day there were one or two sketches acted out, showing the benefits of RinJ.



First meeting ever to take place in the new St Luke's

When we had local volunteers leading RinJ groups on the 2nd day, quite a good number had not really grasped the difference between being a small group leader and a school teacher, with some of them standing up to deliver the teaching. This prompted Andrew during the feedback to do some very simple group dynamic diagrams (see appendix) to illustrate the difference of approach. We were very gratified to see a huge improvement the next day with the trial RinJ groups being far more interactive and a much greater sense of engagement from all group members.

We were also very grateful for Eric Twine's encouragement and involvement, despite the fact that during the conference his wife Margaret was extremely ill following the birth of their 6th child. We continue to pray for her full recovery. The high number of delegates bears witness to Eric's commitment to the programme.

We began the second conference at Bulindi, about 30 minutes' drive from Hoima, on Monday 9th March. Bulindi is in a delightful rural setting and, as before, we were aware that the churches in the archdeaconry seemed to be even more remote and rural than in the Kagadi Archdeaconry. We met Joyce Asaba, the diocesan Mission Coordinator, who had just heard that her ex-husband had died that very day, and understandably felt she should attend his funeral. However, she arranged for Ronny (another member of the Diocesan team) to accompany us in her place. We had about 65 delegates of whom possibly 12 had attended the previous conference and about another dozen had been involved in Rooted in Jesus groups.

On the first day Hilary Buckingham was leading the demonstration lesson for what was meant to be the most experienced group. It turned out that not all of them had attended the previous conference, although we believe they had all had some involvement in RinJ groups. As the session progressed, 3 of the group confessed that they had never actually invited Jesus into their lives as their Lord and Saviour. Hilary had the great privilege of being able to lead them, there and then, in a prayer to do just that.

On the second day, Andrew decided to use the group dynamic diagrams *before* the first set of local volunteers led their trial RinJ lessons. As we observed the groups, it was gratifying to see that they seemed to have grasped straight away what it meant to be a small group leader facilitating the involvement of the whole group. On the final afternoon, one of the groups performed for us a song which they had composed using their memory verse for the day, Psalm 119 v.105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*



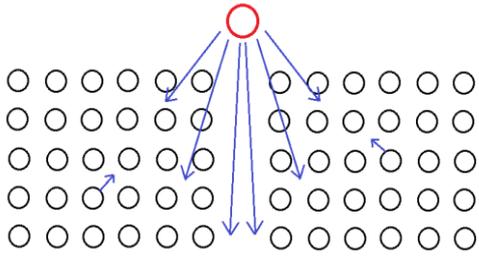
Again, we were encouraged by the degree of enthusiasm and engagement from the delegates (with the possible exception of one or two clergy who were a little cautious at the thought of giving such leadership responsibility to laity). Our only regret was that due to the unexpectedly high proportion of first-timers, we did not have quite enough copies of Book 1 to distribute at the end of the 2nd conference. We tried to make sure that each village church had at least one copy of Book 1.

It was a very encouraging trip for all of us, particularly to see the extent to which RinJ is getting rooted in Kagadi. The conference in Kagadi had nearly 4 times the number of delegates as in November 2012. If we had realised this at an earlier stage, it would have been good to have had a larger team, possibly including some of the more experienced leaders from Kagadi.

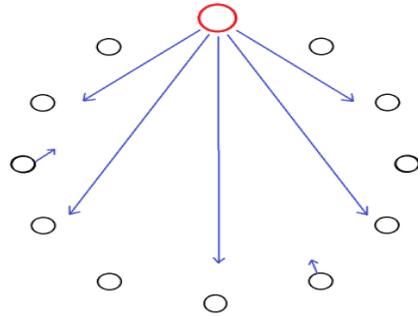
In many ways, it felt like we were almost starting from scratch in Bulindi although there were a small proportion who had been involved in leading groups. Clearly it had been difficult for the diocesan mission co-ordinator Joyce Asaba to provide adequate supervision without more support from the local church leadership. We had been concerned at the first-time conference in November 2012 about follow-up, especially as the Archdeacon, Canon Francis Barunga, was not able to be present due to a prior commitment. However, we were impressed and encouraged that this time not only was Archdeacon Francis present, but he involved himself fully in the conference and was extremely enthusiastic about the RinJ programme and approach. Consequently, we feel confident that this time around there will be much better follow-up in the Bulindi Archdeaconry.

Andrew Petit, March 2015

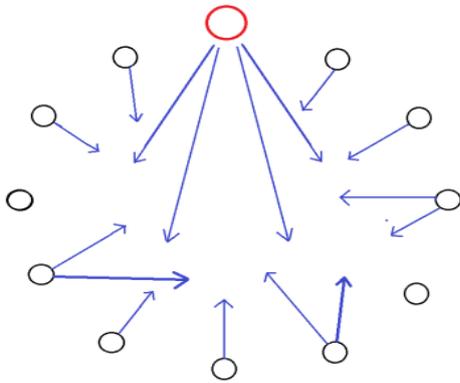
Appendix – group dynamic diagrams



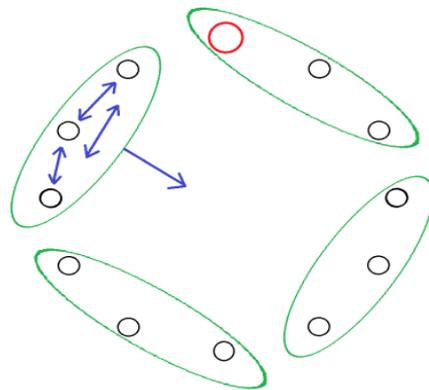
Traditional school teacher model



Small group but with leader still using school teacher model !



Small group leader giving some teaching but encouraging everyone to share with whole group



The benefit of sub-groups enabling the more shy members to share as well

There can be more variations on these:

e.g. dealing with the group member who dominates the group not allowing others to speak.

For more information on Rooted in Jesus visit www.rootedinjesus.net