

# Rooted in Jesus Junior Conference

## Diocese of Mara, Tanzania

Musoma: 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2015

Team: Jonathan Rendall (TL), Philip Bromiley (all UK), Lucy Mugwanja (Kenya), and Alison Morgan.

The enthusiasm and commitment of the 38 Sunday School teachers from across the diocese grew with each passing session through the four days of this joint adult and Junior Rooted in Jesus conference hosted by Bishop-elect Jacob Robert. While enjoying their specific agenda and training, as in all joint conferences, the Junior attendees shared in the ministry times and in the morning devotions with those attending the adult conference; meals too were a shared opportunity for fellowship.

Among the participants were two from the original *RinJ Junior* conference held in 2013 in Bunda, returning for a refreshing, while the others were from parishes where the Rooted in Jesus adult programme is established or soon to be established. From the outset, there was an understanding of the call on our lives for an effective and well-rooted discipleship both for ourselves and for the children in our churches. By Day 4 it was evident from the practice lessons that most of the attendees had grasped the ethos and methods of teaching and learning of *Rooted in Jesus Junior* and the vision for discipling children; it was encouraging to see the developing practice in their leadership in these sessions. The questions and comments afterwards during the feedback were also encouraging.



Team member Lucy Mugwanja

On Day 1 Lucy and Jonathan presented the demonstration lesson, to the delight of many - especially the two presenters, as the evaluation and response to the lesson was most encouraging: the 'Junior way' of teaching and learning had been observed and noted. Translation issues and the low numbers attending meant that the workshops were led for conference as a whole rather than breaking up into smaller groups. The morning of the second day provided opportunity for a catch-up session instead of the devotions for the late-arrivals who had missed Day 1; eleven people benefitted from this opportunity. Philip engaged us all with balloons and water in the Holy Spirit teaching session while Alison led the Pastoral Care workshop. Lucy and Jonathan also delivered their workshops as a whole group.

From the very start, Lucy was our excellent translator with some assistance on the final two days from a local pastor who was attending the Junior training for his own church and in conversations revealed his knowledge and understanding of English. Unusually for a *Rooted in Jesus Junior* conference there were more men than women in attendance; this was a joy and delight as we looked ahead to the establishment of groups across the Diocese. The teaching, the seminars, the practice sessions were all much appreciated and enjoyed.

38 people were commissioned as RinJ Junior leaders at the closing worship on Day 4. They will receive follow-up visits from the Diocesan co-ordinator in the near future.

### Leading a Rooted in Jesus Junior Group

Following the conference the Team travelled to Bunda for a wedding, where we met Christina who leads a *Rooted in Jesus Junior* group in the local church. Christina was interviewed by Jonathan with Helen Hoskins (CMS Australia) acting as interpreter.

*Christina please tell me about the Rooted in Jesus Junior Group?*

"I like these Books (the Junior course books) because they teach a child to learn how to grow in the Holy Spirit as a Christian and as a child known by Jesus, to understand how the Holy Spirit can lead us and make us holy, learning from Jesus who is our helper"

*Why are the Books so good to use?*

The books explain very well and help the children to learn the Bible verses. They help the teachers so even when we are teaching we are learning".



Christina listens as one of the children answers a question about the memory verses

*How do the practical demonstrations work?*

“The practical demonstrations work very well. The children can now sing the Books of the Bible without reading them”.

*Are the children giving testimony as to how the Holy Spirit is changing their lives and can you give me any examples? “*

A child will say when she has the Holy Spirit she doesn't do so many wrong things because the Holy Spirit runs away (if she does). Then she needs to repent, then the Holy Spirit forgives her and renews her in her life. The Holy Spirit lives in the children's lives and gives them a holiness and they can look forward to eternal life”

*What advice would you give a new Rooted in Jesus Junior leader about running a good group?*

“Follow the syllabus and learn how to teach the children in groups putting the bigger ones in their own groups. It is very good to have groups. The very small ones have a group especially for them; we don't use *Rooted in Jesus Junior* for these very small ones as we use a book we have already got until they are old enough to use *Rooted in Jesus Junior*. These Books help us to teach children so the children will learn.

*Do your children contribute and take part in the life of the church?*

“The children share in the church life; cleaning the church, giving their offertory and helping with our offertory. They can sing in the church. At the end of the year, we have a special celebration for the children, we have a party with the whole church. We invite all the parents even those who do not come to church, we invite. We have food for them all: rice, beans. The children say their memory verses, they do an exam with prizes for the ones who do the best. They do acting in church and say all their verses as well. Our children are very visible in the church and we value their progress”.

*Do children from your group go on to confirmation?”*

This is the first year that we have had *Rooted in Jesus* children getting confirmed. Four children got confirmed from *Rooted in Jesus*; they have done the first Book”.

Alison and Kim accompanied Jacob Robert the following day to meet the group and talk to the children, who confirmed what Christina had shared with Jonathan.



Children are keen to share what they have learned in the group

### **Testimony of healing from Rahema from Bunda**

Rahema attended both the 2013 and 2015 conferences. “I had gone home to die”, she testified to the Junior conference on the last morning of the Musoma conference. Rahema then told us the story of her healing arising from prayer in 2013. Her husband had HIV/Aids and a few days after the 2013 conference she was due for the second of her HIV tests – the first one had been positive. In desperation she had asked for prayer for healing for her and her husband on the night before she was to return home. “I was going home to die.” The test proved negative; her husband is still alive and they have a beautiful and healthy baby daughter. Rehema is rejoicing in God's grace, healing and love especially in the gift of her daughter! She now leads the *Rooted in Jesus Junior Group* at her church.

### **Philip Bromiley reflects:**

Several moments were truly memorable. The way participants in the course were genuinely fired up to go out and deliver RinJJ, particularly in Mara. The way individuals were touched by the Holy Spirit to discover Jesus afresh in a variety of different ways: Captives delivered from evil, visions of angels, renewed relationships with Jesus. The evening worship in Masasi cathedral and the tangible cloud of the Lord's presence will stay with me forever. I was also struck by the tremendous sense of unity in the team. Unity not only was evident within the team, but also between the host dioceses and the team. The good relationships between Alison, Jonathan and the bishops enabled this to happen.

My services and preaching have been full of Tanzania since my return. My churches have enjoyed hearing of the church in another context. I have enjoyed getting congregations to sing in the African style too. The ethos and *raison d'être* of RinJJ has reminded me personally that we need to be discipling children in the UK too. This is very much at the forefront of my thinking at present and will undoubtedly have an impact on my vision for future ministry.



The team are appropriately dressed, at last...