

# Rooted in Jesus Conferences, Diocese of Mara

July 2015

Team: Alison Morgan (TL), Kim Philpot, Amanda Bruce (adult programme)  
with Jonathan Rendall, Philip Bromiley, Lucy Mugwanja (Junior programme)

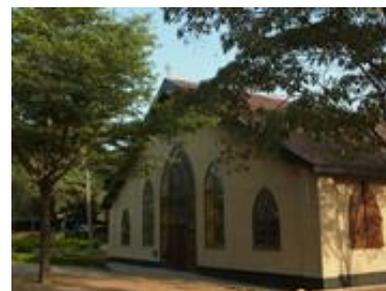
The Diocese of Mara has been using *Rooted in Jesus* to great effect since 2011, and there are now over 80 groups meeting, one or more in almost every parish of the diocese, many of which are now completing the programme – known locally as ‘The Family of One Heart and One Mind in Rooted in Jesus’. *Rooted in Jesus Junior* was introduced in 2013, and over 70 Sunday Schools now teach their children this way. The programme is overseen by Canon Jacob Robert (adult) and Revd Grace Daudi (children). Jacob is also part of the national leadership team for RinJ in northern Tanzania, and now the bishop elect of this diocese.

Jacob had invited us to return to Mara (where support for RinJ has also been provided through a team from the link Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist in South Africa) to run two conferences: one for Sunday School teachers, and one for Mothers Union leaders. This is the first time we have ever run a conference specifically for women leaders, and as Jacob prepares to begin his episcopal ministry it was an excellent way of affirming the growing ministry of women in the diocese. It was a privilege to work alongside Grace, the MU President, and her deputy Beatrice, who had worked hard to organise the conferences.

The conferences were attended by some 90 participants from across the diocese, about 70 of whom received certificates qualifying them to lead either Sunday School or Mothers Union groups. The numbers were evenly divided between the two conferences, the big surprise (for us) being the high proportion of young men chosen to represent their parishes at the Junior conference – there are few leadership opportunities for younger people within the church, it seems, and it was encouraging to see the energy and commitment they brought to the conference.

After the conferences were over, the team divided, with Alison and Kim remaining in Mara before travelling to Arusha, and the others moving down to the Diocese of Masasi in the south to lead a further RinJ Junior conference. It was a privilege for Alison and Kim to be able to spend a couple of days visiting parishes which have RinJ groups: we went to Bunda on Saturday, Butiama and Nyakiswa on Sunday, and Buhemba and Gesaria on Monday. In Bunda we met with an established Junior group led by Christina, with 20 enthusiastic children keen to answer questions and share memory verses. In Buhemba, where the church has some 1000 members, we met with a women’s group newly formed by a conference participant, and heard of the two new Junior groups also formed the day before. In Gerasia we listened to powerful testimonies from three existing group members, and were invited by Pastor Samuel to name the new church (now called Holy Trinity), before meeting some of the orphans cared for by the church, and feasting on rice and meat in his traditional walled family home.

Alison and Kim then travelled by road across northern Tanzania via the Serengeti National Park to Arusha, where we met with Bishop Stanley Hotay and the new RinJ administrator Cate Mwega, with Jacob Robert and Linnet Smith who was coming to the end of her last visit as RinJ Link Officer. It was good to hear of the plans for expansion and development of RinJ within the Province, and particularly of the recent Synod meeting of 10 bishops with Bishops Stanley Hotay and James Almasi. Cate is doing an excellent job as RinJ administrator, and there are plans to appoint two new deputy zonal coordinators to support Jacob and +James in their roles. Morale is high, and further conferences are due to take place in Masasi, Lweru, Victoria Nyanza and Mpwapwa in the next few months, supported by the Anglican Communion Fund grant received earlier this year.



Mara cathedral, where the conferences were held



a conference workshop



Travelling in the diocese



The congregation of Butiama, linked with St Peter’s Gildersome



Members of the Junior group, Bondo

Alison Morgan, August 2015  
[www.rootedinjesus.net](http://www.rootedinjesus.net)