

Rooted in Jesus Junior Conference

Diocese of Masasi, Tanzania

28th – 31st July, 2015

Team: Jonathan Rendall (Team Leader), Revd Philip Bromiley, Revd Amanda Bruce (all UK), and Mrs Lucy Mugwanja (Kenya).

“Wow”! was the response of Bishop James Almasi at the close of Day 1 of this *Rooted in Jesus Junior* conference in Masasi – with an added ‘wow’ for each of the next two days!



The Conference was held in the Umoja (Freedom) Conference Centre in Mtandi, Masasi and the four days were characterised by a freedom in the Holy Spirit throughout: in our teaching and learning, in our relationships, in our worship – at all times there was a joy and peace amongst us all. Participants came from three Dioceses: from Masasi (44), from Newala (3) and from Mpwapwa (14) together with their *Rooted in Jesus* coordinator, Canon Dunstan Mtoro. The Mpwapwa team, one from each deanery, are already leading their groups having been trained through apprenticeship to those who attended the Morogoro Regional *Rooted in Jesus Junior* Conference in 2013.

Bishop James invited a team to come to Masasi to renew the Diocesan vision and commitment to children’s discipleship; to see new groups formed, and established groups in the parishes and out-stations refreshed and renewed. *Rooted in Jesus Junior* was first piloted in two parishes in Masasi in 2009 (Bishop James was then a parish priest in one of them) while the first full Diocesan conference was held in the very same hall in 2010.

Bishop James’ presence as interpreter and as enthusiast for *Junior* gave importance and credibility, value and authority, passion and wisdom to the whole conference; a gifted and skilled interpreter we all much enjoyed working with him while participants delighted in his humour and enthusiasm which, combined with his interpretation of cultural issues, enhanced the whole conference. Each activity in the day became an event – especially the Holy Spirit teaching session with water in abundance everywhere! One moment following this particular seminar that the attendees will remember was our gathering around him to pray, “come Holy Spirit”. As +James quipped later, “you will never forget this moment when you return to your parishes and tell them of this time when you prayed like this for your Bishop”.

Each day started with worship led by the New Jerusalem Choir based at the cathedral; this gave them an opportunity to perform and practise prior to a major Festival for Choirs the following Saturday in Masasi. We appreciated the joy and vibrancy of their singing.

Every session was well received by the participants, four of whom had returned for a refreshing from the 2010 *Junior* conference. At their commissioning, they asked for Book 3 or Book 4; highlighting the need for the renewing of *Junior* in the Diocese and the appointment after some years of inactivity – one of Bishop James Almasi’s key desires in 2016 is the renewal of the adult programme also.

The workshops were offered as whole conference events due to the lack of translators. Canon Dunstan translated for the Practice Sessions and Lucy Mugwanja presented her own workshop and teaching seminar in swahili. By Day 3, the conference had clearly grasped the concepts behind *Junior*, and the Practice Sessions demonstrated a good level of understanding, which bodes well for the groups in the parishes.



For the team, this was a conference we shall long remember: the formal welcome by the Diocesan Leadership team, the enthusiasm of the participants; the efficient organisation of our hosts with the programme for each day efficiently managed and always running to time; the care and

attention to our welfare and well-being, the excellent facilities for the conference; our Team unity and worship, not forgetting the ministry times held in the cathedral.

Reflecting back, Bishop James commented, “the ministry times were great opportunities for us all each evening to be free in the Holy Spirit to receive the blessing of Almighty God. Each time we were enabled to know and experience more of the love of God in his power. Many lives were changed and greatly blessed by the Holy Spirit in this Conference. We thank God for his mercy. On the third day, our faces were shining with the glory of God.”

One of the RinJ intercessors back in the UK had been praying: “a cloud of blessing descend on them (Exodus 40.34-end)”: and it did. This cloud of the Presence was a moment on Day 3 we shall all remember – a powerful encounter of the glory of God.

The conference closed with a celebration of Eucharist, with a reminder from John 13 that as Jesus has washed our feet this week so we group leaders we are to wash the feet of our children, to serve the children of our dioceses – perhaps the Certificate is our towel. We also received a prophetic promise:

“You obey me: I will give you my children to love
You pray: I will give my blessing to you and to my children
You serve me: I will give you the harvest because I trust you with my children: feed them for me”



Certificates were presented to all following the Eucharist. The Mpwapwa group arrived at the end of Day 1; so a ‘catch up’ seminar was provided for them at the close of the conference before their long journey of 16 hours starting very early the following morning.

This was a *Rooted in Jesus* conference where everything came together. The outcome will surely be refreshing and renewal in Masasi, the establishment of two *Junior* groups in Newala (the new Masasi Junior coordinator will also have responsibility for the Newala groups, relating also to Bishop Oscar). God’s blessing was experienced by us all; surely, there will be many children disciplined for Jesus in these three dioceses.

Jonathan Rendall

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.

August 2015

www.rootedinjesus.net