

Rooted in Jesus, Mityana, Uganda Report

9-24 October 2015

by Ian Smale

Mityana is a town in the Central Region of Uganda. It is the main municipal, administrative, and commercial centre of Mityana District, with the district headquarters located there. Population of the town is approximately 48,000. The Diocese of Mityana has a population of 1.5 million, 45% of whom are Anglicans.

The team of four from Overton (Ian, Sue, Pete, Dee) arrived in Mityana on Friday 9th October. We were collected from Entebbe airport by the broadly-smiling Diocesan Mission Coordinator, Canon John Musaasizi. Canon John was not only our principal point of contact with the Mityana diocese but he also went out of his way to make sure we had all we needed, were looked after and were transported to wherever we wanted to or needed to go. He couldn't have done more for us.

James and William, the two Ugandan members of the team, arrived the following afternoon after a long journey with an early start. James was our team leader and an Archdeacon in the East Rwenzori diocese. The arrival of James and William immediately raised our prayer life to a new level. They invited us to pray with them as soon as they arrived to give thanks for their own and our safe arrival, despite the fact that they were very weary after their very long journey. That same afternoon we ordered some tea for James and William and, before we drank it, we gave thanks to God for it. This discipline of regular prayer and thanks for everything was new for me but I came to really appreciate it.

James arranged for us to meet up at 6.30 am every morning starting with the following morning for a devotional time. James fixed up with Canon John for 3 of us to go to and take part in the nearby church of St Stephens on the Sunday morning (Ian, William and Dee) and the other 3 (James, Pete and Sue) to the Cathedral - 7.30 am services in both places. These were followed by a second service where we repeated what we had done (preach, pray etc) at the first. The 3 who attended the cathedral participated in two services that morning. At the 7.30 am service (the youth service) James gave an appeal to the 400 + people present and over 50 came forward to give their lives to the Lord Jesus.

First Conference - Mityana

Approx 65 attended (approx 25 clergy and 40 lay leaders and students). All received certificates at the end of the week. The great majority of the delegates absorbed the teaching, training and ministry very enthusiastically.

Practice sessions

William had demonstrated on the first day how to run a Rooted in Jesus session and on the following two days practice sessions took place in 6 groups. The practice sessions helped enormously in getting the ideas across of how to run a group effectively with max group member participation. The ministry times were well used with many of those present coming forward for prayer. As always in Africa the worship was lively, enthusiastic and heart-felt. William was especially gifted at leading us all in worship.



On that first week we met Ben David the young youth pastor working with Emmanuel at All Saints Church in Mityana town. Ben David told us how he had been brought up in a family that went to church and his parents were nominal Christians. When he was 15 he wanted to be confirmed having been baptised as a baby. At the confirmation classes he discovered what it meant to be a *real* follower of Christ. He gave his life to the Lord and went home and told his parents. They were not pleased because they said that they had dedicated him to a local ancestral spirit god when he was born. He could not give his life to anything or anyone because they had already given his life to this spirit god. He would have to take his life back from Jesus. Ben David refused. A few weeks later his father asked his son to go somewhere with him. He took him to the witchdoctor in order to rededicate his life to the spirit. Ben David ran off in fear of his life. He made it to the main road and hitched a lift from a passing motorist who took him home. His father was mad and kicked his 15 year old son out of the house telling him never to come back. He was banished from the family. Ben David went straight to the vicar of the church and she allowed him to sleep in the church until something more permanent could be fixed up. Ben David's testimony is that Jesus supplied every one of his needs. Now he is working for the church and studying full time. His mother and sister have become born again Christians since then but he is still working on his father. He completely embraced the teaching and methodology of Rooted in Jesus (as did most of the delegates) and he and Emmanuel went out the following Wednesday after the first week of the conference to a part of Mityana where a lot of young people hang



out. That Wednesday night they recruited 15 young people to their first ever Rooted in Jesus discipleship group, 9 of whom gave their lives to the Lord Jesus that night. Praise God.

On the middle weekend Ian and Sue went with Canon John and Jethro to Kibubula church about an hour's drive out of Mityana town. Ian preached at the Kibubula church 10.00 am service following which 30 people gave their names to the local parish secretary to be part of a Rooted in Jesus discipleship group as and when they start up there.



Second Conference - Kibubula

70 delegates – approximately 25 clergy and 45 lay leaders. All received certificates at the end of the week. Most of the clergy have several churches to run in their parishes – especially those in the rural areas. Rev Mark, the vicar of Kibubula parish, for instance, has 9 churches with congregations that meet every week. So he has to rely on lay leaders every Sunday most of whom have very little theological training. So the Rooted in Jesus course is an excellent tool for the lay leaders themselves to be better grounded in the truths of the Christian faith as well as being an invaluable tool for them for teaching church members. Some of these church members will themselves be able to become lay leaders themselves and run Rooted in Jesus courses for those around them.



On the Wednesday of this 2nd week Bishop Stephen welcomed the RinJ team, thanked us for coming and prayed for God's blessing on the rest of the conference.

The **workshops** were very well received. Every time we offered **prayer ministry** many came forward for prayer bringing their needs. On the first evening the prayer ministry was conducted at the front of the hall where the worship was also being led by a drum. The worship was so loud and enthusiastic that we had to ask those who came forward for prayer to shout their requests into our ears so that we could hear them – not conducive to good prayer ministry. However, the Lord knew their needs and he heard our prayers. We learned from this for the next night when we invited people to come for prayers of repentance and renewal. Some confessed to financial mismanagement and some to adultery. It was a special time of repentance and renewal. James invited seven of them to give their testimony. Two of them told how they had come to a real faith in Christ whilst on the conference; others spoke movingly of their repentance and their desire to change.

At the end of the second week Canon John thanked the team for coming to Mityana. He said he had been the Mission Co-ordinator for the diocese for 35 years and had hosted many visiting teams over those years but he had never known a team like this one and a conference like this. It is the best that he has ever been involved in.

Team members write:

Dee Spencer

I feel more confident within myself to set about my Christian work, leading in a positive, 'can do', attitude.

Memorable moments - amazing worship, realising most of the clergy were not paid at all, the loving welcome we had into several homes, seeing children in clean uniforms everyday emerge from very basic living conditions. Of Africa itself - wonderful skies at dawn, torrential rain, the variety of flora and fauna and the red, red soil.

Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity of a life time!

Sue Smale

My lasting memory of the trip is the dependence on prayer and the exuberant worship. I have found myself much more free in worship since coming back.

Coordinator John Musaasizi wrote in October:

I am very thankful to be involved in the Discipleship program of Rooted in Jesus. I completely buy into statements made by other people, whose conviction and experience led them to say that, "Rooted in Jesus Program is the best on African Continent." It starts where you are and progresses you joyfully into the adventures of growing into Christlikeness. Mityana Diocese is privileged to have such a program at a time when multitudes of people have subjected themselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Of late I was greatly thrilled upon receiving into my office a number of people who participated in the most recent R in J Conference. They were eager to receive the books in order to return and start small groups in their local churches. I am looking forward to following up the already established groups. I will be sending you messages of great accomplishments by the Lord within our midst.

And in December:

I have been in contact with several brothers and sisters in Christ who participated in Rooted in Jesus Conference. I am glad to report that almost everyone who went through the conference has started identifying members who will constitute the groups. Already 13 groups are taking shape with a total number of 145. There are two groups with a total number of 40, and these will be divided for proper management. I have already sensed great enthusiasm among the leaders in their work.