

Rooted in Jesus

Annual Report 2021

2021 has been another challenging year, with the Covid 19 pandemic not only causing illness and death but also preventing fellowship, travel, and in many places the generation of income. Churches across Africa have been particularly hard hit, with news coming in of famine, armed raids, enforced exile and war, as well as increased poverty and lack of resources related to the pandemic itself.

And yet thanks to the persistence of our partners there was good news too. Rooted in Jesus conferences went ahead in DR Congo, Tanzania,

Madagascar, South Sudan and Uganda, and the first Zoom conferences were held in South Africa. In many places we learned that the Rooted in Jesus groups had been able to meet even when churches were closed, some in person, some online. People came to faith in Madagascar, Mozambique and Uganda and joined new groups set up to disciple them, and another new parish was inaugurated for families recruited through Rooted in Jesus Junior in Madagascar. Here in the UK a final book was added to the adult programme, and translations of the existing booklets commissioned

and completed in twelve languages. Encouraging testimonies were received, and we have a growing number of invitations which we hope to fulfil in the coming year.

We have continued to pray regularly through our prayer diary and intercession group for conferences, coordinators, group leaders and specific needs. We are thankful that our income has remained sufficiently stable to enable us to provide ongoing support to our partners, and we hope that we will be able to continue to support and expand Rooted in Jesus in the year ahead.



Rinj conference in the Diocese of Wanyjok

South Sudan

In November we were able to honour a long-standing invitation to introduce Rooted in Jesus to the Diocese of Aweil. Translation into Dinka Rek, which has a unique alphabet, had proved challenging, and international travel restrictions had delayed our ability to provide a team. But a window between lockdowns made it possible for the team to travel and the conferences to go ahead not just in Aweil but also in neighbouring Wanyjok. Over 200 people were trained to lead groups, and many testified to spiritual renewal, physical healing and personal encouragement.

Sudan

Just over the border in the Diocese of Kadugli, daily life continued to be very difficult. Many people were forced to flee their homes, with entire areas falling under the control of armed rebels; it was, coordinator Babuj Simon explained, 'an inconvenient situation.' But some Rinj groups formed into smaller units and kept going, and a small diocesan team composed of Rinj group members and youth leaders ran an outreach programme in the Nuba Mountains, where 22 people came to faith. The diocese hopes to host a followup Rooted in Jesus conference in 2022.

Tanzania

Although Covid 19 has been present in the country, Tanzanians have not been required to live under restrictions. This enabled the national team to remain active throughout the year. Rooted in Jesus was introduced for the first time to the Diocese of Bihar-amulo, the youngest in the Province at only 4 years old; and a followup conference was held in the Diocese of Victoria Nyanza. Further training was provided in the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro, where coordinator Clement Manyatta reports that there is an increasing demand for Rooted in Jesus in Masai communities.

This is a rapidly expanding diocese, with over 400 new churches planted in the last decade; Rooted in Jesus is a key tool for discipleship amongst both adults and children.



Masai pastors receive books from Bishop Stanley Hotay

Rooted in Jesus

Madagascar & DR Congo

DR Congo

Missionary bishop Elisha Tendwa has already used Rooted in Jesus to help plant a new diocese in Kalemie, DRC, and he has now been asked to prepare another new diocese, Lake Tanganyika. "Rinj is a backbone of my ministry; the church has spread faster through groups introduced by Rinj," Bishop Elisha said as he requested a team. So in March a team from Tanzania and Burundi led a Rooted in Jesus conference for 110 leaders. The conference was opened by Archbishop Katanga, and by the end of the year groups had been established in 9 parishes.



A Rinj workshop in Uvira, DRC

The Diocese of Fianarantsoa

Several new churches have been planted using Rooted in Jesus, and in February this led to the inauguration of a new parish at Ambahy.



In April 200 additional copies of the Malagasy Rooted in Jesus Junior books were printed, and a training conference was held for Sunday School teachers in October - a key initiative in a diocese where children make up 60% of congregations.



Coordinator Jean Flobert reports that there are Rinj groups in 21 parishes; local coordinators have been appointed and further expansion is planned..

A thousand kilometres further north, CMS missionary Peter Wyard is serving as Coordinator of Christian Education in the Diocese of Aru, with a focus on discipleship. Peter and his colleagues have been running Rinj training conferences in the archdeaconries, with the aim of establishing a group in every parish. The leaders' books are being translated into Lugbarati, Alur and Kakwa. Rinj was first introduced to Aru 10 years ago, but DR Congo is a tough place to minister, with no common language in the diocese, very low educational levels, poor roads and a history of war and displacement. It's encouraging to read of the obvious impact on people's lives as the course is revived (see over).

Madagascar

2021 marked the 10th anniversary of the introduction of Rooted in Jesus to the Dioceses of Fianarantsoa and Toliara, with both the adult and junior courses in use in the Malagasy language, and regular training provided for leaders by local coordinators in both dioceses.

Madagascar is a peaceful and beautiful island, but it is subject to regular and violent cyclones, and this year, for the first time, to what was described as the world's first climate-change famine. The Diocese of Toliara was particularly badly hit. With help from friends they were able to distribute food in the affected areas, saving people from certain death and leading to an explosion of faith: "What religion is this that cares? We want to join you," Bishop Samitiana reported. In just one parish, 1900 new believers were baptised and 9 new churches planted - built by the new converts themselves. Rinj is being translated into three more local languages to cater for the new believers, and new leaders are being trained.

In Fianarantsoa, Bishop Gilbert sums up their shared approach: "We have an opportunity to provide a Christian response, including a message of hope. We are learning to fortify the faith of our people and staying with them through prayer, fellowship, guidance, and counselling."

It is a huge privilege to stand alongside the people of Madagascar as they walk with faith through such difficult times.

Rooted in Jesus

South Africa

South Africa has been one of the African nations hardest hit by Covid, and the first to make extensive use of Zoom. Growing the Church ran online training courses for group leaders in the dioceses of Natal and Pretoria. A church in Pietermaritzburg managed to complete all four books of Rinj under Covid restrictions, (below) and a group in Cape Town is preparing members to lead their own groups.



2021 also saw a change of leadership, with Trevor Pearce retiring as Director of Growing the Church at the end of the year, and Bruce Woolley stepping into his shoes. We are hugely grateful to Trevor, and look forward to working with Bruce.

Uganda

In Uganda Covid restrictions were strict, with schools and churches closing for months at a time. But in some places Rooted in Jesus groups were able to continue meeting, playing a key role in providing pastoral care and strengthening the faith of their members. In January the Diocese of Soroti emerged from a 6 month lockdown with 184 groups still intact, and in May 100 new sets of leaders' bookswere printed. In October Coordinator Pascal Odele reported:



'Rooted in Jesus has helped most groups during the lockdown. We formed 22 groups in one Church, and the group members were able to memorize Scriptures.'

In the Diocese of East Ruwenzori Rooted in Jesus was introduced in 2019, and in March 2021 James Tumwesigye reported that 146 groups were meeting. About a third of these persisted through the lockdown, and in December his successor Philip Twebaze wrote:

'After the lockdown, I was given an opportunity to go around the diocese to encourage brethren. The Christians were there and were much blessed by Rooted in Jesus. Groups were keeping the parishes' fellowships very warm and encouraging them to be strengthened by using the message from book 1.'

Wilma's group in Pietermaritzburg continued Rooted in Jesus online: "It was amazing how God was right in the centre guiding us. People were not so shy doing it this way. The growth was amazing. We went out and we did service on the street, we did music and we prayed. If you had said to me a year ago that I would be teaching on a street corner I would have probably laughed. But Fr George said we must go out to the people. The group is now going to homes that have lost somebody during this time, and focussing on supporting them... I want to say a couple of things people have said, how Rinj has taken them out of their comfort zone. Someone said, it's not complicated to know Jesus, it's just following the instructions."

"We have continued using the study books in our Ministry teams both with parish and diocesan staff, it's been very helpful to both lay and ordained ministers. A few parishes have extended its use to individual pastorate groups at the very grass root. Bishop Rose Okeno, Diocese of Butere, Kenya

Testimonies

"Since churches were closed in most areas, these small Rooted in Christ groups became the major focus for spiritual growth and fellowship for many." Carlos Capito, Diocese of Niassa , Mozambique

"The course has comforted me a lot, especially lesson 4 about the need to pardon one another. I recently lost my aunt. The family had been divided into 4 groups in conflict with each other. When they met to discuss what to do after my aunt's death, the family asked me to share with them what I had learned in the course. After I had done so all through the night, the whole family agreed to forgive one another, and now they are eating together again. They thanked me very much for what I had shared as their son. It is the course that has sustained me and continues to sustain me. Now I am capable of helping others." Group member, Diocese of Aru, DRC

"There is a big change in the people we teach, and through it two chiefs joined the church. The chiefs are giving testimonials on how their village is changing. People in this village as well as members from CDJ Church are becoming born again through this teaching." John Seda, Church of the Disciples of Jesus, Malawi

"The Diocese of Lake Rukwa is running Rinj at the Cathedral Deanery. About 15 to 20 people attend. This has helped the church around the Cathedral to grow very fast as the small group from the Deanery meets every Tuesday afternoon and learns to take out the Gospel." Canon Jacob Robert

In brief

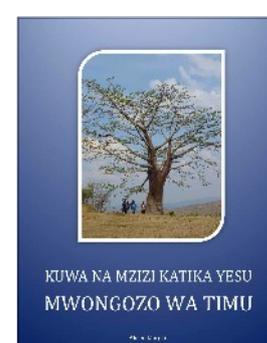
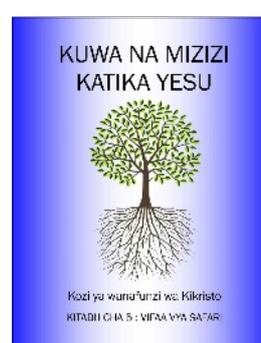
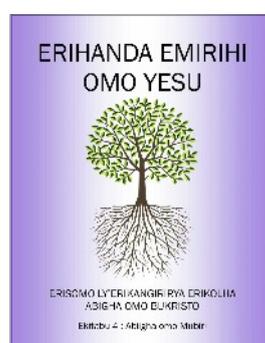
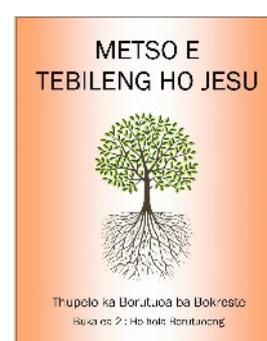
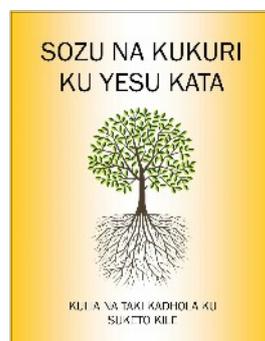
We have also kept in touch with those using Rinj in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mozambique; conferences are planned in these countries in 2022. In Zambia, Dignity continues despite the frustrations of Covid to progress towards their vision of planting half a million groups by the end of the decade.

Rooted in Jesus

Translations & editions

In 2021 we continued to use the time created by Covid lockdowns to commission new translations of the Rinj leader's booklets and the Team Manual. We also added a fifth and final book to the adult programme, which introduces members to the spiritual disciplines and provides a blueprint for ongoing Bible study. We hope this will enable groups to continue to meet and deepen their spiritual lives even as members develop a ministry of their own.

Rooted in Jesus is now available, in whole or in part, in English, French, Arabic and 45 African languages.



In 2021 Rooted in Jesus was translated in full or in part into the following new languages:

- Dinka Rek (for S Sudan)
- Local Arabic (for S Sudan)
- SeSotho (for Lesotho)
- Kakwa (for DR Congo).

Further translations have been made into the following languages:

- Kumam & Lhukonzo (for Uganda)
- N Sotho & Zulu (for S Africa)
- Alur & Lugbara (for DR Congo)
- Thok Naath (for Ethiopia)
- Masai (for Tanzania & Kenya).

Both Team Manuals and the new Book 5 have also been translated into Swahili, and further revisions and translations are under way in other languages.

We have continued to develop new local print partnerships so that Rooted in Jesus can be supplied to dioceses needing additional stocks: we are now able to print books in Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and South Africa. Dioceses have also been able to arrange their own printing in DR Congo and Uganda.



Twenty years of Rooted in Jesus!

In 2021 Rooted in Jesus crossed a new threshold, completing its twentieth year. To mark the occasion we created a new cover design. Rooted in Jesus is now on its third edition, and all the updated booklets, including the new Book 5, will now be issued in eye-catching colours, with the Rooted in Jesus tree highlighted in the centre. Rooted in Jesus Junior will be continue to be identified by its retention of the traditional design.

Rooted in Jesus is published and supported by The Mathetes Trust, UK registered charity no 1169869.

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