

Rooted in Jesus team to the Diocese of Masasi, Tanzania

August 2009

Team: Alison Morgan (TL), Michael Samuel, Matthew Grayshon, Fred Connell and Jonathan Rendall.

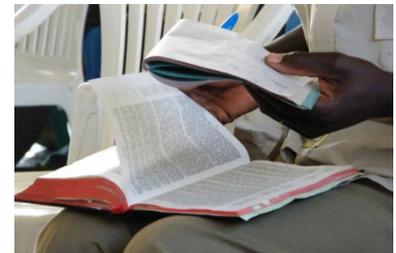
Bishop: Patrick Mwachiko.



The Diocese of Masasi is in southern Tanzania on the Mozambique border, and is linked with the Diocese of Hereford through whom the initial contact was made. From September it will divide into two, forming the new dioceses of Masasi and Newala. We were working with the priests and catechists from both the new dioceses, and our team included Michael Samuel, the *Rooted in Jesus* coordinator from the Diocese of Kiteto; Jonathan Rendall, from Hereford; Matthew Grayshon, a ReSource Associate and experienced SOMA team leader; and Fred Connell, vicar of the Vale of Belvoir in Leicestershire.

This trip was remarkable in a number of ways. Firstly, for the difficulties experienced before we got there – due to the late decision of a September date for the inauguration of the new diocese, our visit was cancelled and then eventually reinstated. The bishop was unexpectedly called away to Provincial meetings for the duration of our stay, and we arrived one team member short due to last minute family illness. But once there, it became remarkable in another way. Two years ago God had spoken to Bishop Patrick from Nehemiah chapter 2, promising that he would ‘rebuild the walls of the diocese’. As we moved into the second week, with the bishop’s wife Emmy joining the team as our principal interpreter, it became clear to her and to Lukas Saidi, the bishop’s chaplain, that *Rooted in Jesus* is intended to be the means by which this promise is fulfilled.

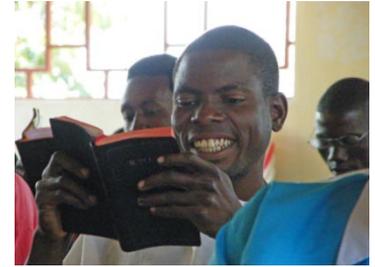
We ran two 4 day conferences, the first attended by 53 clergy and their wives, the second by 58 catechists. The first week was characterised by a seemingly universal recognition amongst those who came that this was an important new initiative for the diocese, and a way of moving forward with the latest resources. Each day began with an astonishing dawn sung eucharist in the century old stone cathedral. We taught in a comfortable conference building, with large, shady mango, acacia and cashew trees providing additional open air seminar rooms. The new teaching method was a challenge, but with two sets of practice groups and a high speed demonstration from Michael, they were off. The newly appointed coordinators Lukas Saidi and Samwel Luhuna rose rapidly and enthusiastically to the challenge, talking late and early with Michael about the best way to support the new groups. But the key moments came in the early evening ministry times. A clergy wife named Monica, a local government officer, was overwhelmed on the first evening by a great sense of the love of God, and she and one or two others were caught up into a loud, prolonged and heartfelt sobbing of ‘Asante Yesu’ (thank you Jesus). On the third day, as we were thinking together about ‘Asking God for more’, we all stood together, hands open, in complete silence, waiting on God, then praying together aloud; until a spontaneous sung ‘Hosanna’ rose in harmony from the united throats of 53 people.



The second conference was for the catechists. The catechists, who had never previously been brought together in this way, spent 4 days singing. Two of them, one limping from a motorbike accident the day before, the other suffering from malaria, led us in a sweetness of worship which we all agreed surpassed anything we had ever heard before (though we preferred the daytime renditions to the night time ones...). This conference was characterised by openness, determination and above all laughter. If laughter is the mark of a growing church, as Christian Schwarz suggests, then this is the diocese to watch! The most telling moment? On the last day, as I sat in

Michael's session on what happens next, conducted in Swahili, I saw them rise as one to their feet, and surge into a line at the front of the conference hall. There they stood, hands open, eyes closed, and – sang. Michael came up to me. They have learned from the practice lesson that we need to make a specific response to Jesus, and receive the Holy Spirit. Most of them say that although they have served God all their lives, they have never formally done that; they are asking if they could do it now, and would you pray for them? I said I would...

We did other things too. On our rest day we climbed the hill behind the cathedral compound to the cross at the top, and prayed for the diocese stretched out beneath our feet. On the middle Sunday we preached in churches, including Mkomaindo where the first freed slaves stopped on their way back to Malawi, preached the gospel and formed what is said to be the first church in East Africa. And in the afternoon we ran a healing seminar in the cathedral.



For us the climax came at the very end. Bishop Patrick had decided that each conference would end with a commissioning in the cathedral, where we would celebrate the eucharist together and where each person would be given a certificate and the *Rooted in Jesus* books. After the final eucharist, thanks were exchanged. We were each given beautiful wooden carvings, handmade by the renowned Makonde tribe, representing the nativity. This, Lukas explained, is 'because you have brought new life to our diocese'. There followed the only standing ovation I have ever received – sung, naturally. I am still recovering from it...



Bwana Asifiwe – praise the Lord! We look forward to seeing what he does next in this wonderful place amongst these wonderful, singing children of his.

News from the Diocese of Kiteto

Michael Samuel was able to share with us some of the latest news from the new Diocese of Kiteto, now independent from the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro. Michael works there with 5 assistant coordinators, looking after the 330 current *Rooted in Jesus* groups. The new bishop is Isaiah Chambala, formerly *Rooted in Jesus* coordinator in Arusha and a member of the team to Malawi and Mozambique in 2006.



Michael told us several stories about the way being part of a group is changing people's lives. Simon Msonde, a Masai who struggled with anger until he met with God (his testimony is on [www.alisonmorgan.co.uk/Rooted in Jesus testimonies](http://www.alisonmorgan.co.uk/Rooted_in_Jesus_testimonies)), is now, along with 4 other members of the first groups, to be made a deacon. But my favourite story is that of Dorisia Chende, an illiterate elderly woman from a village near Dongo. When her group prayed to receive the Holy Spirit, Dorisia received the gift of tongues. The next Sunday, she stood up in church and said there was someone present with a problem in her abdomen, and she wished to pray for her. Another woman duly stood up, suffering from continuous bleeding. They prayed for her; she was immediately healed. Dorisia continues to receive words of knowledge and to pray for people in her village.

Prayer pointers

Please pray for Bishop Patrick, and for Lukas Saidi who will coordinate the programme in Masasi Diocese. Pray also for Samwel Luhuna, who will oversee its development in the new diocese of Newala. Thank God that we were able to leave money to buy a Good News Swahili Bible for each group leader, and pray that these will reach the intended recipients. And pray for each of the clergy, clergy wives and catechists who will lead a group: the programme starts at the beginning of September, in the midst of the inauguration for the new diocese!

Alison Morgan, August 2009. For more on *Rooted in Jesus* click [here](#).