

# Diocese of South Rwenzori, Uganda

## Rooted in Jesus Junior Conferences

14<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> June 2014

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Bishop Jackson Nzerebende's invitation to Rooted in Jesus to send a team to lead three *Junior* conferences in his Diocese is the outcome of the faithful servant-hearted leadership of the adult *Rooted in Jesus* course which was introduced into the diocese in 2009 and 2010. Since then the initial 40 groups have grown to over 100 groups. William Musisi, the RinJ assisant coordinator, wrote in 2013, "About the *Rooted in Jesus Junior* conference, here in South Rwenzori Diocese, we have many children who are unreached, and it is our desire to have that conference."

This was a memorable two weeks. The three conference centres gave opportunity for people from across the diocese from urban, rural and the scattered congregations in the Rwenzori Mountains – snow capped all year and stunningly beautiful – to spend a very full three days in training for *Rooted in Jesus Junior*. On each occasion *Junior* was received with real enthusiasm; at the final conference in the mountains this was particularly so, and for some this had meant a walk of four hours. One family we met when while looking round the village prior to the conference suddenly appeared on a track through the banana plantation coming down the mountainside on the last stages of their three hour walk through the forest from across the mountain - the husband was carrying the foam mattress roll while his wife carried their baby of a few months and some spare clothes. We were humbled by the privilege of serving at Mbale, of worshipping and praying together, of sharing in their lives. A number of nursing mothers brought their children, such is the enthusiasm for *Rooted in Jesus*.

Across the diocese the teaching and training sessions engaged conference members fully. A good number of those attending were Sunday School teachers, and there was considerable excitement over this new syllabus and new way of teaching and discipling children. The workshops engaged and enthused everyone; preparations for the practice sessions often extended into the night hours. Many of those attending were already in *Rooted in Jesus* adult groups for themselves so had a personal enthusiasm and commitment for discipling children. Many testified to the blessing received at the conferences; enriched in faith and renewed in love for Jesus, blessed through the ministry – these were times of an encounter with God for many in this forward looking and creative diocese.

The commitment to *Junior* grew as each of the conference days passed and this, combined with the joy of fellowship and a real desire for their own developing discipleship, ensured that *Junior* was well planted in many hearts and minds. Reports received after the conferences have indicated that many groups have already started and that the group leaders are encouraged. 248 people were commissioned to lead *Junior* groups and in turn to apprentice new leaders.

Ministry times gave opportunity for conference participants to be refreshed and renewed in their own faith. At each venue there were significant encounters with God as people came for prayer, for pastoral care, to be filled with the Holy Spirit or for healing. Testimonies abound of the Father's love poured out, of his grace and mercy impacting lives; demons were cast out, the sick were healed and the



Kingdom preached; headaches, fevers, stomach pains, emotional healing and some particularly challenging situations were prayed into.

One notable healing was for a team member; a hiatus hernia sufferer for 30 years, his life was transformed after prayer for healing. We rejoiced as over our final three days in Uganda he ate foods he had not eaten for those many years! This, his first *Rooted in Jesus* conference and he returned home saying, "*this whole experience has changed my life in many ways*"! Glory be to God.

Other opportunities to minister in the Diocese were given through preaching at Bwera Parish Church, All Saints Church in Kasese and at the Cathedral; through Messiah Radio (this a diocesan Christian radio station) with three opportunities to broadcast in Lukhondo to the 4 million listeners in Uganda and DRC with *Rooted in Jesus Junior* as the focus theme; also we had the opportunities to speak at Bwera Secondary and Bwera Primary Schools.

The Evaluation meeting gave opportunity to review these three conferences with 18 members of the senior staff in the diocese who made it very clear that *Junior* has their full support; they will do what is needed to prosper and promote this new programme. William Musisi, now the coordinator for *Junior*, has the backing and finances to lead, support and develop *Junior*. The Bishop's wife's care and concern for children was heeded and affirmed, "*We must now do something special for our children*", said Dorothy Nzerebende, in summary. All seven archdeacons attended the conferences, were commissioned, and are committed to giving their full support to *Junior*, thus endorsing the diocesan commitment to discipling children as a high priority in terms of funding and prayer, and building on the adult RinJ course with a very real determination to see *Junior* flourish and children nurtured as disciples.

The prayerful preparations for the conferences were excellent; the organisation was efficient. William Musisi accompanied us throughout our time in the diocese; a man with a strong vision for *Rooted in Jesus* and a deep desire to see children and young people disciple and fathered. We were welcomed into people's homes and received warm hospitality wherever we went. Our sincere thanks to everyone in South Rwenzori for wonderful friendship, fellowship and hospitality. We thank God for our intercessors and for the gracious way in which the Diocese and the Team were able to work together; we were all enriched by our experience in the Diocese of South Rwenzori.

Jonathan Rendall

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