



## “Growing the Church”

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# Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

## Rooted in Jesus Training Conference: 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013

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### **1 Introduction**

The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist is situated in the rural province of Limpopo, the northern part of South Africa bordering on Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique (and including  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Kruger National Park). It was the first in South Africa (after Niassa in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa) to introduce Rooted in Jesus, in 2009, when a team came from the UK. In 2010 another UK team led a follow-up conference. Since then, RinJ has been spreading slowly but steadily in the Diocese. Leaders from the Diocese have also taken part as team leaders and members in several conferences in Southern Africa and Tanzania.

The Diocese has adopted RinJ as:

- ✦ Basic training for Confirmation preparation (at least Book 1)
- ✦ Foundational training for Lay Ministers – where we have various categories: Worship Leaders, Preachers, Pastoral Carers, Evangelists and Youth Pastors (at least Books 1 & 2)
- ✦ Foundational training for Self-Supporting (also called “Community”) Clergy (Books 1-4).

When we planned for 2013 it seemed that the time was right for us to run our own RinJ Training Conference, since we now have enough accredited trainers to do that. In addition to those who had already participated in a Training Conference, we decided to target two other groups in particular:

- 1) Young Leaders from the Diocese who have the potential to make disciples who make disciples;
- 2) People who had expressed an interest from the relatively nearby Dioceses of Pretoria, Johannesburg and Mpumalanga.

We are extremely grateful to RinJ UK who made a donation which enabled us to sponsor 50% of the conference fee for young people.

### **2 The Team**

We had two main goals in assembling a team for this conference:

- 1) To present the best possible RinJ Training for the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist;
- 2) To train future RinJ Conference team members and leaders from the Diocese.

The team therefore comprised one person who had led conferences before (†Martin), two who had been part of RinJ Conference teams before (Jack Kudumela and Rebecca Shika) and two newcomers (Frauke Ackermann and Shearsby Mupfudzapake). The team worked well, each one contributing their particular gifts and passions to the overall experience. We took time to meet, pray and evaluate progress each day.

### **3 The Programme**

Fortunately 21<sup>st</sup> March is a public holiday in South Africa (Human Rights Day, commemorating the Sharpeville massacre), which made it possible for us to have three days, starting on that Thursday morning and finishing on the Saturday afternoon. It also meant that young people could attend, since the Friday was a school holiday. And clergy were able to participate without missing Sunday services.

We increased the number of Small Group practice sessions to 3 – one led by a team member and two led by participants. Each of these was followed by an evaluation session, using the six questions that our team in Mara, Tanzania began to develop last year. This proved very useful and helped the groups to keep focused on what they were supposed to do. The six questions are:

- 1) Did the groups learn the **memory verse**? (Would anyone like to demonstrate?)
- 2) Did you make use of the **practical demonstrations**?
- 3) Did everyone **participate** and what was done to encourage this participation?
- 4) Did the group **stick to the subject** and not get distracted by other issues arising from it?
- 5) What was the **main point** of the lesson? (Summarise it in your own words)
- 6) Did the group **pray together** and pray for one another?

Because we had four team members (apart from myself) we were able to offer four workshops – and each team member was able to lead a workshop in an area where they have particular skills. One great sadness was that Jack Kudumela had to leave early on the Friday after getting the tragic news that his brother had been murdered (fortunately the police have tracked down the perpetrator). I had to take over his workshops on Leadership at short notice, but they seemed to go ok!

### **4 The Participants**

We met at “Mater Dei”, an excellent Roman Catholic retreat centre not far south of Polokwane. About 70 people participated in all, a large proportion of these being young people from the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist. The participants from Johannesburg and Pretoria were astonished at the calibre of our young people on the course – which was a great encouragement to us. Unfortunately the Diocese of Mpumalanga failed to send anyone (I have since discussed with their Bishop their need for a new RinJ Coordinator).



*Participants in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist RinJ Training at Mater Dei from 31<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013.*

As is always the case in Africa, the worship was spontaneous and vibrant, and the participants were keen to get to know the Bible better and be equipped and formed as disciples of Jesus.

### **5 Conclusion**

Since the conference I have heard of a number of participants who have started RinJ groups in their parishes. The quality of those being presented for Confirmation in the Diocese is also improving as RinJ is used more effectively in their classes.

The Diocese is committed to continuing the RinJ process and we have planned a one-day follow-up event on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July – led by the same team. Some of those who came from Johannesburg have told me that they are planning to join us. It is exciting to us that a “poor, rural Diocese” like ours can give something of lasting value to the City of Gold!

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