

# Rooted in Jesus Junior in the Diocese of Mara, Tanzania

June 2013

84 Sunday School teachers, 3 archdeacons, 1 Vicar General and 2 canons from across the Diocese of Mara spent four days at Bunda Training Centre at the Rooted in Jesus Junior Conference in June: a diocese in common with many in Tanzania where over 60% of the church are children. *“Welcome to our diocese, welcome to Tanzania”,* said Hilkih, Bishop of Mara Diocese. *“The Gospel must be properly preached, properly led and properly resourced to support the engine of the church and it is children who are the engine, the strength of the church. We are just tyres; nearly worn out. Our children need knowledge; we must gift it to children and if we have children who have the Word of God the Anglican church will go far’.*

Over the four days there was an increasing engagement and enthusiasm for Junior and a developing momentum as the delegates engaged in the creative activities, in the training and with each other. Their passion and enthusiasm for Junior was greatly encouraging; the practice groups especially seemed to inspire and nurture this understanding for a new way of learning and teaching. Some members of conference were taking notes, then sharing and re-telling what they had learned; sometimes questions were being answered by another group member – modelling the training! We noted that attendees had been freed up in their own learning, having been given permission to question, to talk, to listen to each other. Whether priests or Sunday School teachers, they recognised the potential of Junior and the challenge being offered to the church for discipling children – all spurred on by the Bishop and his visit.



There were many testimonies of God’s grace and blessing through the ministry: God did miracles in Bunda: healing and restoring, renewing and ministering at points of need: an eye infection healed, inner healings, a mother with AIDS whose countenance and worship was utterly transformed (we await the result of her re-test) and a woman with severe menstrual bleeding was healed (testimony received some weeks later). Sometimes we prayed for healing with no interpreter; God came in power and blessed. The Spirit of God was clearly at work; language and cultural differences melting into insignificance. On Day 3, eighteen people gave their lives to Christ during the teaching session on the Holy Spirit, with many responding later to the opportunity to be filled with the Spirit, to be equipped to teach and disciple children.



The encouragements from the Diocesan staff was significant: +Hilkih and his wife Martha, the MU Chair. The Vicar General and the archdeacons stayed throughout. Also encouraging to the delegates were the two lunchtime archdeaconry meetings held for the Sunday School teachers; here was opportunity to talk, plan and pray with their archdeacon. At the commissioning the Vicar General spoke of his early days as a Sunday School child in 1950s where there was a real poverty of experience and teaching for children. *“In those days”,* he said, *“we were in darkness about teaching children; now we are in the light. I encourage you because you have been blessed with these teachings. Go and work to save children, release yourself and God will not forsake you. You are the only people who can save your place, who can transform people’.*



An encouraging report from Bunda was received on the Monday following the conference from Sam Daniel, a CMS Australia missionary, whose family had welcomed us to Bunda. She texted: *“Please pray for your Sunday School teachers. Today at our church, Lamech led Sunday School and for the first time I heard wonderful joy and laughter coming from outside. I was so impressed. It was different. Two elders however went out and told them to be quiet. I was thinking this is probably the case in other churches today too; I made an announcement to explain why SS were so happy this week. People understood and were happy but there may be some churches where there isn’t anyone to*

*explain. Pray that the teachers won't lose their passion.' .... Lamech had clearly been inspired, the training had been received and put into practice on the first day back into Sunday School – before any Junior group had been started!*

Canon Jacob Oyange, Rooted in Jesus coordinator, commented, *'the conference has succeeded like I have never seen before and the passion of attendees is very big. I saw the Holy Spirit moving in the way people were talking and rebelling against the past showing that we were doing nothing for children and now we have something to do with children. This conference has strengthened me too.'* We thank God for our welcome, our hosts and the privilege of serving the church in Mara Diocese.

As a team we were encouraged by and thanked God for his Word on Saturday morning, 'you have tapped deep into the heart of God; his love will be spread across the diocese and further as children are disciplined for Jesus in the unity and power of the Holy Spirit. This is my plan and purpose; we shall see great growth'.

Team members wrote:

- "Yesterday, I was with the Diocesan Children's coordinator. He is a youth and Children's pastor at the Cathedral, has been my friend ever since he knew the Lord. I discussed with him on how we can do something on the training I received and we are meeting again this week to map out how to start teaching at the Cathedral as we plan for the major training. He was very happy to get that there's a way Sunday school teachers can be trained. They developed some curriculum, not been so much used and with no training but when I shared with him he was as happy and I pray God will give us a way" – Joshua Opondo, Diocese of Maseno South, Kenya
- "It is almost beyond my ability to explain what a difference it makes to visit an African country as opposed to viewing programmes about it. It is humbling to see how other people live and to be invited into their homes and so valuable to see how complex life is there with such variations of wealth and access to health and education. It has also been so useful when talking to children here to give first-hand experience of what I saw (like people living without easy access to water). I loved the enthusiasm for praying out loud amongst the delegates" – Valerie Challis, Diocese of Oxford, UK



**The Mara and Morogoro Junior team:** Canon Jacob Oyange (Mara), Revd Grace Daudi (Mara Diocese), Nicole Corlew (GtC South Africa), Capt Joshua Opondo (Maseno South, Kenya), Val Challis, Sandy Hewit, Dave Smith and Jonathan Rendall (team leader).

Jonathan Rendall, July 2013

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