

ROOTED IN JESUS

Annual Report 2023

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The Mathetes Trust

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.' Colossians 2.6-7

LOOKING BACK

It's now 21 years since Rooted in Jesus was created for the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. During that time we have facilitated more than 200 training conferences for over 100 Anglican dioceses and denominational networks in 18 African countries. Rooted in Jesus has been translated into 50 languages, and Rooted in Jesus Junior into 10 - and more are on the way.

Over the years we have faced many challenges - how to finance it, how to staff it, how best to support it once it has been introduced. Demand for Rooted in Jesus seems to increase year on year, and we now find ourselves ministering in increasingly challenging places. In 2023 we were asked to run conferences in South Sudan, DR Congo, Mozambique and Madagascar - countries scarred by conflict, afflicted by famine and often subject to devastating floods and cyclones.

It is, and has always been, a huge privilege to be able to make a small contribution to the lives of ordinary people in these often forgotten places. We could not do this without the support, prayer and active participation of many people - and as we head into another year we want to take this opportunity to say thank you: for all that is past, and for all that is yet to come.

D R CONGO

Two years ago missionary bishop Elisha Tendwa invited us to send a team to the Lake Tanganyika region of the **Diocese of Bukavu**, where he had been asked to prepare for the creation of a new diocese. By the end of 2022 groups had been established in 17 parishes; 'even non-Christians attend the groups,' Bishop Elisha wrote, 'and the community have seen the changes in the Christians.'



So in 2023 the Bishop of Bukavu, Sylvestre Bahati, decided to host two further RinJ conferences: one to provide additional support and encouragement for the existing leaders, and the other to introduce RinJ to the 100 clergy of the parent Diocese of Bukavu. The conferences were facilitated by a team from the UK and Burundi led by Revd Amanda Johnson, and attended by 206 people.

By the end of the year there were 46 groups in the missionary area of Lake Tanganyika, and a further 21 groups in the northern part of the diocese. 'This,' writes coordinator Jules Bulambo, 'is a great resource for growing disciples and leading souls to Christ.'

Meanwhile in the **Diocese of Aru**, CMS missionary Peter Wyard and coordinator Revd Emmanuel Etseg-eri had trained a team of local facilitators to help raise up a new generation of leaders in each of the 10 archdeaconries. Emmanuel sent an encouraging video report at the end of the year: there are now groups in every parish bar one - 62 in all, of which many are now on Book 2 or 3. It's not easy - challenges have included armed conflict, huge distances between the parish centre and the chapel groups, and social problems such as bereavements, personal troubles, illness. But the testimonies of group members have brought hope, Emmanuel says, and 'that's why I love to praise my God and to seek his face.'



Participants receive certificates in Fianarantsoa

MADAGASCAR & MOZAMBIQUE

Rooted in Jesus was first introduced to the Diocese of Niassa, Mozambique back in 2006, and to the Dioceses of Fianarantsoa and Toliara in Madagascar in 2011. Much has changed in both countries since then!

When we first went to Mozambique there were just 2 dioceses, and the last landmines were still being cleared, the legacy of the civil war. Now Mozambique is part of a new Anglican Province of Mozambique and Angola, and has planted 6 more dioceses. In 2021 Bishop Vicente Msosa moved from Niassa, where he had long experience of Rooted in Jesus, to lead the new **Missionary Diocese of Zambezia**, where the church is growing very fast. He sees the training of leaders to make disciples who will make other disciples (Matt 28.19-20 & 2 Tim 2.2) as key to the future. So in May 2023 a team from South Africa and England, led by Bishop Martin Breytenbach, offered a two-track conference to train people to lead Rooted in Jesus groups for both adults and children. By the end of the year 34 groups had been established in 7 parishes, and Bishop Vicente wrote: 'Rooted in Jesus continues to saturate in our Diocese. Changes are evident in the churches, one can see what the Holy Spirit is doing through the training, and I personally am so grateful to God.'

Both Mozambique and Madagascar are subject to cyclones which seem to increase in severity year by year. Churches are regularly flattened and homes and crops destroyed. And yet in Madagascar the **Dioceses of Fianarantsoa and Toliara** have persisted in their determination to place discipleship at

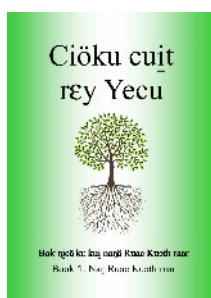
the heart of their ministry. 60% of the population are children, and in **Fianarantsoa** Rooted in Jesus Junior has been used to plant many new churches. Both programmes are mandatory resources across the diocese, and in 2023 Bishop Gilbert Ratelosen asked us to help with their vision for growth by returning to train a new generation of leaders for the adult groups. The conference, facilitated by a UK-Madagascan team led by Alison Morgan, took place in October, and by the end of the year 87 new groups had been established, many in previously unreached areas. There are now more than 4,000 adults and children actively involved in groups across the diocese, supported by 8 local coordinators.

Toliara lies in the driest part of the country, far to the south. Poverty is high, educational levels are low, and famine is a regular occurrence. Bishop Samitiana Jhonson is undeterred by the difficulties: would we come back to train new leaders for adult groups, and help create a diocesan team of Rooted in Jesus Junior facilitators? The conference was a joyful occasion, with a whole deanery turning up in Rooted in Jesus t-shirts, and a stampede of song and dance. The books for both conferences were printed locally, a target has been set for 30 people in groups in each parish, and all those who study at the newly inaugurated St Patrick's Theological College are required to have completed Rooted in Jesus first. 'Why is it,' Bishop Samitiana says he is often asked, 'that the older denominations have smart buildings and shiny floors, and we don't have any of that?' 'We,' he tells them, 'have Rooted in Jesus - we have life.'



Left: sharing in a practice group, Zambezia. Centre: RinJ Junior conference, Zambezia. Right: Young graduates of RinJ train to lead RinJ Junior, Toliara

SOUTH SUDAN



We have been seeking to support the Anglican church in South Sudan since 2012, the year following its inauguration as an independent country. It is by far the most challenging of the destinations we visit: there is little infrastructure, widespread poverty and illiteracy, and many people have been displaced from their homes by the resurgent violence which continues to threaten their lives.

In January 2023 Bishop Tim Wambunya, formerly Bishop of Butere, Kenya and now vicar of St Paul's Slough, took a team to the **Diocese of Maiwut** in South Sudan to introduce Rooted in Jesus for the first time. Maiwut is located in the far north of the country, and is both geographically isolated and characterised by extreme poverty; Bishop Peter Gatbel, who has not been provided with a house, and who was suffering from malaria, was robbed of most of his belongings on the first night. But he had arranged for the leaders' booklets to be translated into Nuer (top left) and the conference was attended by 105 people, with over 2000 present at the service on the following Sunday.

As so often, those who have least seem to do the most with what they are given. Revd John Jamuth was appointed Coordinator. In February he reported that 75 groups were already completing Book 1, and that he had held an additional training day. By December John was able to tell us that 117 groups had completed Book 2: 'RinJ programs in the Greater Maiwut and Longechuk counties have been a successful discipleship outreach that involved many groups in the community to learn God's word and share together in the spirit of brotherhood. The clergy, mothers union, youth, disabled and children were all benefitting from this discipleship training. We all felt the Spirit of God

working in us. The group leaders and participants have learned a lot from one another, and that was a blessing to all.'

At the other end of the country, the **Diocese of Nzara** held its own Rooted in Jesus conference in November. Revds Josefate Datiro and Alison Mboringha had established some pilot groups following their participation in the 2022 conference in the Diocese of Yambio, and they joined the team led by Revd Dr David Archer for this conference, which was attended by 150 people. Books were provided in the majority language of Dinka (top right), and Bishop Richard Aquilla reported that groups have started in 23 of the 24 parishes.

Meanwhile we were delighted to receive reports from those dioceses which had held conferences in 2022. **Nyam-lel**, where Bishop Peter Garang had given each archdeaconry a mango tree to represent RinJ as a foundational programme in the diocese, reported that they have 27 groups. **Tonj** is a new diocese covering a huge area, and coordinator Zechariah Dut has struggled to visit the more remote and insecure archdeaconries, but there too groups had started. Bishop Joseph Mamer of **Wanyjok** had explained that 'what we have been doing all these years was a massive evangelism, many people leaving their traditional ways of worship and surrendering their lives to Jesus, but discipleship and training as in the Great Commission has been left untouched, and this is what we want to focus on now.' By the end of 2023 his determination had born fruit in 125 groups. In **Wau** groups are running in two archdeaconries and in the Cathedral and in **Yambio** there are now 60 groups, 10 of which have reached Book 3. Further conferences are planned for 2024.



A RinJ practice group, Nzara



Conference worship, Maiwut



Conference participants, Maiwut

NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

BURUNDI

Rooted in Jesus was introduced to the **Dioceses of Buhiga and Rutana** in 2022, and we were delighted to receive reports from both dioceses during the course of the year. Coordinator Revd Vianney Ndi-hokubwayo of Rutana reports that there are now 119 groups, of which 85 are ready to begin Book 2. Coordinator Philemon Ndayifukamiye reports from Rutana that there are 62 groups, many also awaiting Book 2. Books are being printed in Bujumbura.

SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa Rooted in Jesus is overseen by Revd Bruce Woolley, Director of Growing the Church. In 2023 RinJ training was provided for the **Diocese of Khabamba**, the **Diocese of Mbhashe** and the **Diocese of Mthatha**. RinJ has now been introduced to 18 dioceses in South Africa, and to the **Dioceses of Lesotho and Eswatini**. It has remained a core part of the ministry of the **Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist**, the first in South Africa to adopt it back in 2009; Revds Respito and Novella write: 'Rooted in Jesus continues to be a prerequisite program in our Diocese, as it teaches people to be rooted in the word of Christ our Lord. Trainers continue to train small groups in their respective parishes. All our archdeacons use it to prepare and empower confirmation candidates.'

Meanwhile in **Cape Town** Bishop Martin Breytenbach and Revd Duncan McLea have begun to provide training to Managers of the U-Turn initiative which helps homeless people experience healing, new life and rehabilitation. 16 managers were trained to offer Rooted in Jesus as a series of daily devotions, with one lesson being covered in one week. Managers are experiencing increased morale, and participants are responding with a growing commitment to be disciples of Jesus.

UGANDA

We received reports during the year from 5 dioceses in Uganda. **South Rwenzori** has been using RinJ since 2008, with the most recent training provided in 2022. Revd William Musisi reports that certificates have been awarded to 150 children who have completed Books 1 in Sunday School, and that some of them took part in the diocesan mission held in November.

Revd Philip Twebaze reports from **East Ruwenzori** that group members are becoming confident in interpreting the Bible, that they are supporting one another and that they are now able to withstand false teaching and defend their faith in Jesus.

The news from the **Diocese of Karamoja** is less good, with widespread hunger forcing many to leave for the cities, and gunshots heard every night. But Revd Pascal Odele reports from the **Diocese of Soroti** that he is working to revive groups which were forced to close during Covid. And things are just starting up in the **Diocese of Northern Uganda**, where this year CMS missionary Preb Simon Cawdell introduced

RinJ to the Theological College students, oversaw translation of the booklets into Acholi and visited every archdeaconry to prepare for the conference to be held in 2024.

TANZANIA

Rooted in Jesus remains active in Tanzania, where it is overseen by Bishop Stanley Hotay. The **Diocese of the Rift Valley** ordered a fresh batch of books for their July youth conference, and in the **Diocese of Lake Rukwa** Canon Jacob Robert has formed new groups for the migrants who arrive looking for grazing and land; 'the ministry is growing daily, and the number of groups is growing rapidly,' he says.

MALAWI & NAMIBIA

In Malawi and Namibia RinJ is used under licence. Julian Lott of **Salt Malawi** reports that following further training in Autumn 2022, many new groups have been created this year within the Church of the Disciples of Jesus. And Jo Kimball reports from **Dignity** that 24 groups have now been established in Namibia - the first ones in the country.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rooted in Jesus is published and supported by The Mathetes Trust. We are a small, independent charity based in Somerset, UK, and although our faith is constantly strengthened by our experiences, our resources are very limited. We are therefore hugely grateful to those who are willing to travel, at their own expense, on Rooted in Jesus teams; to those willing to set aside time to pray for the conferences; to those who prepare the translations and interpret for us while we are there, and to those who provide the financial support which makes it all possible.

We are particularly grateful to the Relay Trust for the partnership which we have with them, and for the grants they have been able to provide over the last year to help dioceses cover the costs of a Rooted in Jesus conference.

For further information about Rooted in Jesus please visit our websites, or contact us on admin@rootedinjesus.net.

