

Rooted in Jesus Annual Report 2020

Putting down roots in Ethiopia

Rooted in Jesus has now been introduced to 92 dioceses and networks in 17 African countries.

IN BRIEF

2020 brought challenges none of us had expected. As a global pandemic crept over the world, churches closed, conferences were postponed, movements restricted, and livelihoods threatened.

We were able to run conferences in three dioceses before national lockdowns came into force, but we had to postpone an additional six conferences, all of which will be rescheduled when the situation permits.

We have kept in regular touch with Rooted in Jesus dioceses, networks and ministry partners, and have continued to support them in prayer through our regular prayer diaries and our intercession team. We have learned to use Zoom, and have used Whatsapp to strengthen relationships with both dioceses and coordinators.

Finally, we have been able to take advantage of a quieter year both to commission and format new translations of the course materials and training manuals, and to begin work on a new Rooted in Jesus Book 5.

A new programme for a new diocese

In February a team from South Africa and the UK were invited to provide RinJ training for those ministering in the new Diocese of Gambella.

The region of Gambella lies in the west of Ethiopia, towards the border with South Sudan. Bishops Kuan Kim Seng and Vincent Rajan had gathered the clergy and seminary students together for their annual clergy conference, and the visiting team was led by Bishop Martin Breytenbach, with Colleen Breytenbach, coordinator Ven Hectorina Tsoetsi from the Diocese of Free State, and Bishop John Hayden, one of the pioneers of RinJ in Tanzania. Revd Jeremiah Paul had arranged for the materials to be translated into Thok Nath and Amharic.



Groups began straight away, and by May Jeremiah reported that RinJ was having a huge impact in the life of the churches. By October he was able to confirm that the churches in Gambella town were seeing great growth and fruitfulness, with many new converts. Despite the real challenges and difficulties posed not only by Covid19 but also by the severe flooding which forced many people to flee their homes, Jeremiah reported in December that there were 47 active groups with 521 members, of whom 233 were new converts. He wrote:

“Rooted in Jesus Ethiopia has been a vital instrument to Christian maturity as well as reaching out to the lost souls. The RinJ serves a purpose during the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. We witnessed how God comforted the victims of the Covid-19 and strengthened churches that started the programme. Rooted in Jesus is the core for our Church Ministry in Gambella. God has indeed blessed us with such an excellent tool for discipleship and evangelism in Ethiopia and beyond. It has become a useful tool for reshaping the direction of our ministries in the Diocese. We do not take it for granted.”

Revd Jeremiah Paul, RinJ Coordinator and Principal of Gambella Seminary.

Rooted in Jesus is published and supported
by The Mathetes Trust
UK Registered charity No.1169869
www.mathetestrust.org & www.rootedinjesus.net



Keeping going in difficult situations

Covid19 has posed a major challenge to all our partners this year - either because of the disease itself, or because of the restrictions introduced to prevent its spread. The Diocese of Soroti in Uganda reported that many vulnerable people were cut off from their only source of support as churches shut and income dwindled. In the Diocese of Kadugli, Sudan, church bells rang morning and evening as borders closed and food prices rocketed. Across the continent pastors were prevented from travelling to the scattered communities where they minister. Add to this the suffering caused by Islamic insurgency in northern Mozambique, ongoing political conflict in South Sudan, armed raiders and locust swarms in northern Uganda, devastating floods in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, and drought and famine in southern Madagascar, and it has not been an easy year.

Paul urged Timothy: "Proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable." We have rejoiced to see the fruits of this persistence. In South Africa Rooted in Jesus training was provided via Zoom, the first RinJ Zoom groups were founded and new outdoor groups were pioneered in Free State. Famine relief provided in Madagascar by the Diocese of Toliara led to 'explosive' church growth, and a whole new parish has been founded with Rooted in Jesus in the Diocese of Fianarantsoa. New groups have been established in Ethiopia and Kenya, and in many places people continued to meet even as churches were forced to close. Nearly everywhere, churches have provided support, education, practical help and above all hope, as people have continued to come together in prayer.

Church women in Toliara making facemasks for distribution in the community



NEW GROWTH IN KENYA

The Diocese of Kitale lies in north-west Kenya. Created in 1997, it now has 71 parishes and 93 clergy. The mission of the diocese is to promote God's kingdom through teaching, discipling and serving for holistic transformation, and when Emmanuel Chemengich was appointed its second bishop in 2018 one of his first actions was to request a Rooted in Jesus training conference. The team was led by Revd Richard Morgan, Rector of the Church of the Good Samaritan in Paoli, Pennsylvania, with Revd Benjamin Kibara from the Diocese of Butere, Kenya, and Revds Morey Andrews and John Eldridge from the UK. The conference was attended by 137 clergy and Lay Readers, and Revd Tarus Kirionon was appointed as the Diocesan Coordinator.

Groups got off to a strong start, and Bishop Emmanuel planned to hold his first support meeting with the group leaders in May - a plan sadly overturned by the Covid19 virus which caused the country to go into lockdown. As restrictions eased, the groups picked up again, and in December Revd Kirionon was able to report "We thank God that we have started a great deal and most groups are finishing with book 1, some are in book 2, few others have gone far ahead to book 3 and 4. We appreciate the offer of grace you gave us through the blessing community of Rooted in Jesus."

One of the Kitale team members was Benjamin Kibara, who oversees the RinJ programme in the **Diocese of Butere**. Benjamin presented an 'electrifying' report on the impact of Rooted in Jesus, with 712 adult and Junior groups now spread across the diocese. Many group members, he says 'are gradually understanding how to make disciples.' During the lockdown some families continued with RinJ in their own homes, but the impact on the ministry of the diocese has been substantial - not least as Bishop Tim Wambunya was admitted to intensive care with Covid, and resigned some months later to take up a parish appointment in the UK.

The Diocese of Kericho hosted the third of the Rooted in Jesus conferences before the pandemic brought gatherings to a close. The team was led by Revd Tim Grew of Trinity Cheltenham, and formed part of the link relationship Trinity has with Kericho. The conference was attended by all clergy of the diocese, each accompanied by a key lay leader. Groups began straight away in 19 of the 26 parishes, with Bishop Ernest Ng'eno leading by example with a group for the Diocesan Staff Team. It is hoped that groups planned in the remaining parishes will start in 2021.

Glad Tidings Churches of Kenya

Rooted in Jesus has now been introduced to 8 dioceses and several Pentecostal networks in Kenya. Some of these networks have proved particularly enterprising and resilient in their response to the pandemic. Brian Keel reports: "Over the past couple of years we have been encouraging some of those we have trained in *Rooted in Jesus* to use the resources in 'less than familiar' locations, places where they didn't necessarily have a strong presence. Covid has brought that about!" In **Kisumu** churches were asked to run RinJ community programmes for young people, and this led to improved morale and new faith commitments. In **Nyanza** the churches moved their ministry into people's homes, and the resulting growth in interest led to the foundation of five new congregations. Similar things have happened in **Busia**, a border town where Muslims have been coming to faith and three new congregations have opened. Brian concludes: "In some areas, there will be support required to continue the advances which have been made during this unprecedented time, and in others, there may well be the need to begin to rebuild because of isolation which this pandemic has caused. However, whichever situation is discovered, we believe there will be wonderful opportunities for expanding His kingdom in the lives of people, both young and old."

REPORTS FROM ACROSS THE CONTINENT

We try to keep in touch with all those using RinJ, and during 2020 we were pleased to receive updates from 38 of our partners, stretching from Ethiopia to Cape Town. Reports from Ethiopia and Kenya are given on p2. Other news in brief:

Ghana

After the reopening of churches, RinJ groups in the Diocese of Koforidua resumed from the beginning of November.

Madagascar

The Diocese of Toliara currently has 68 groups, and aims to double this number in two years. Ven Jean Flobert of the Diocese of Fianarantsoa reports that "RinJ Junior is leading to considerable growth in some parishes, with more and more children attending, and new families coming into the churches as a result."

Mozambique

In Niassa Charles Kapito reports that when churches closed for worship, small groups became central to their ministry. There are now 49 adult and 71 Junior groups, and they plan to double these in the next twelve months.

South Africa

The biennial Anglicans Abaze conference was held virtually, with an explosion in numbers attending, and a new digital ministry being launched. RinJ training was provided in Lesotho, Natal and Johannesburg, and testimonies of spiritual growth received from Kimberley & Kuruman, Cape Town, Natal and Free State.

South Sudan

RinJ has continued as a core part of the curriculum in Kajo-Keji Christian College. Conferences planned for the Dioceses of Aweil, Maridi and the Northern Province were postponed to 2021.

Sudan

The Diocese of Kadugli held a one day conference for RinJ leaders. Groups reduced in size to enable greater member participation; many were disrupted by local violent conflict, but the Cathedral groups remained strong, particularly among the youth.

Tanzania

Conferences planned for 2020 were postponed. In the Diocese of the Rift Valley, groups continued to meet in the

early part of the year, with many moving on to the second book. In Mount Kilimanjaro coordinator Clement Manyatta reports that groups have resumed; he has presented a plan for growth in 2021, focussing particularly on the many new churches planted in Masai areas.

Uganda

In the Diocese of East Ruwenzori, local training was provided in the early part of the year for the 37 group leaders. Coordinator James Tumwesigye reports that groups have grown, members become active in ministry, and new people have joined the church. In the Diocese of Soroti Bishop Odongo encouraged clergy to form groups during the 6 months of church closure, and there are now 184 groups meeting across the diocese.

Zambia

Covid restrictions severely impacted all church activity. Dignity Worldwide reported continued growth in their non-denominational rural ministry, with over 900 groups now meeting, primarily in Zambia but also further afield.

Everybody welcome!

"It is interesting to see that although this material was designed to teach people who are not necessarily literate, that it was malleable enough to be used effectively with graduates in the city context." *RinJ Zoom group member, Cape Town*



Meeting during lockdown

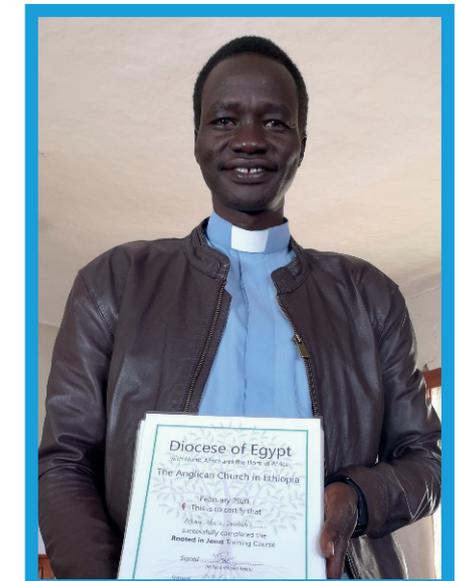
"Even if there is lock down of Churches, people are meeting in their cell groups sharing the word of God, and one of the tools that has helped is the Rooted in Jesus material."

Canon Pascal Odele, Diocese of Soroti



Hope and faith in God

"People are happy because they did not understand prayer at home. We are doing it practically. People are growing spiritually. Even in this difficult time of coronavirus they have hope and faith in God." *Ven Hectorina Tsoetsi, Diocese of Free State*



RinJ training in Johannesburg; group leaders meet in Kadugli; RinJ spreads across Africa; certificates are awarded in Gambella

NEW TRANSLATIONS AND EDITIONS

Rooted in Jesus

2020 was a year of new translations and editions of the adult Rooted in Jesus programme. Books were translated into Thok Nath and Amharic for use in Ethiopia, existing translations into Zande, Masai and French were revised and updated, and work in an additional 11 languages was initiated.

Rooted in Jesus Junior

We were delighted to be able to publish Rooted in Jesus Junior in French for the first time, with all six leaders' booklets being translated by Virginia Youdale. This will enable Rooted in Jesus Junior training to be provided to Sunday School teachers in DR Congo and Burundi.

Training materials

The two Rooted in Jesus Team Manuals provide material both for initial training and for local support and implementation. This year we were able to produce the first edition of the RinJ Junior manual in Swahili, translated by Gaspar Kassanda and Abel Obura.



In their own words...

“It has been a precious experience to be part of a group. There has been a measured approach with our leaders preparing very well and not placing on us any dogmatic agendas or pressure to go and start a church immediately. You have reminded me first and foremost that Jesus wants to have a relationship with me.” RinJ Zoom group member, Cape Town

“The enemy has succeeded in keeping places of worship closed temporarily but he has not succeeded in preventing the St Luke’s RinJ from their weekly fellowship via social media. Every Thursday I look forward to spending time and discussing the word of God with my fellow RinJ members. Learning the memory verses has helped me to overcome trying and negative situations during Lockdown” - RinJ group member, Diocese of Natal

“Rabbecca leads a Life Group in Central Zambia. She told us that during the time of COVID it had been important for the groups to encourage themselves to keep meeting in whatever ways they could. Rabbecca helped people start new groups this year. She spent about 3 weeks teaching and helping others to start them, lent them her copy of *Rooted in Jesus* and after reading it they were so encouraged they planted a group.” Dignity Worldwide

“These groups have really been a blessing to the people that meet. The ones that had the opportunity to meet have been enjoying and getting encouraged as they journey towards building and growing their relationship with our God. Many groups have already completed the first book and now as they continue with classes they’re using the second book.” Diocese of the Rift Valley, Tanzania

“Since *Rooted in Jesus* and *Rooted in Jesus Junior* were introduced it went well and the programme was good. Children were able to recite the memory verses, praying for themselves and giving testimonies in front of people. We have model parishes where children have memorized all the books of the Bible; they lead services in the churches and preach.” Revd William Musisi, Diocese of S Rwenzori, Uganda