

Rooted in Jesus Conference, Diocese of East Ruwenzori

May 2019

Team Leader Mike Cotterell writes...

'Wow, just read your update Dad, sounds amazing! Meeting all those people on the road - Like something straight out of the Bible!' An emailed response from my daughter to a daily update for prayer supporters while I was in East Ruwenzori, Uganda. Many things happen while on Mission, some planned like the Conferences themselves but then extras, like 'chance' meetings that God seems to orchestrate – and on that day we had a handful of those. A conference looks like: A Team, a group of participants and a location over four days. But another side of the reality is that there are thousands of significant moments: Person to person conversations, individuals listening and in conversation with God. Sharing of testimonies, acts of kindness, encounters with God; whole conference experiences of the presence of God. So, a Conference is a complex network of lives touching each other, with the Holy Spirit an active ingredient, like yeast in a batch of dough. God inspiring his agenda and firing his people; and this against a background of human weakness and negative spiritual interference.



I would like to focus this report on moments of inaction rather than facts.

The night before the conference started, we had a meeting by way of introduction, with a talk and worship; I think it set the tone and expectation. We gave an evangelistic talk based on Belteshazzar's feast. The worship was very lively – the Bishop was texted and replied 'We have been jumping in worship with the team'!

'Mzungus' (white people) taking a break on a car journey in a small town was the source of curiosity, that led to a good conversation with two passing young brothers who were in the church choir in the town. We gave them each a 'Why Jesus' booklet and told them it's a good booklet to help people to believe in Jesus; on page 18 there is a prayer of commitment.

On a leisurely stroll to the Cathedral further up the hill from the school where the Conference was held, two team members met Deacon on the road. He was carrying containers for sale, we chatted and prayed for him; he wanted to earn enough to return to school and pay its fees.

Then we met Agnes and a small group in the Cathedral, fasting and praying for the day. Agnes shared how she had recently been released from 18 months in prison on remand, falsely accused of killing the son of a wealthy person – who it seems was looking for someone to blame! She told us how God had sustained her through the hard times, and gave her testimony - it was full of Bible verses of God speaking to her. Andrew was due to give a talk later that evening, and as she shared, it seemed to illustrate perfectly his subject. We invited her to share her experience with the conference – wow she did!

On the way back from the Cathedral: Hamid, a Muslim, we had said hello to him, was found to have followed us. He looked about 5 years old, we got to talk a little about Jesus - with the help of some who had just appeared on the scene and translated for us.

At the guest house on the last evening, a motorbike taxi arrives, the driver says 'This girl has been sent to see you and the grandmother is walking up the hill behind us'. The girl, maybe 15, half hid behind a tree, shy, embarrassed and unable or unwilling to speak. Grandmother arrives striding up the steep hill, no English, the taximan tries to explain, 'The girl is mad, she needs prayer'. The team gathers to talk and pray, but what is the problem? Slowly the situation is partly unravelled, but then one of the girls working in the guesthouse appears and helps translate – It seems the trouble started way back with some kind of ritual with milk from a nursing dog that had been smeared on her, and now amongst other things the girl barks and has wild behaviour. We shared about Christ's victory and prayed for her deliverance, and although she did not normally speak, she did, at last, pray herself, repeating our words; she knew English. What about follow up and pastoral care, we were soon leaving? Just then - James the Mission Coordinator arrives on his motorbike – he and the grandmother know each other already!

Oh yes! – let's turn back to reporting on the actual conference! 170 people were trained to start *Rooted in Jesus* small groups. Attendance - many were clergy, lay readers, about one third were women, mostly from the Mothers' Union. The Diocesan team were well organised and showed exceptional unity and cooperation. What didn't go so well was the timetable – the meals were delayed and this affected everything. BUT as everyone was resident and relaxed, it didn't seem to matter and we finished each day, later, but having not squashed or deleted everything in the programme – I still

don't know how that was possible! A short ad hoc survey at the closing meeting revealed: 100% of the conference enjoyed it. 90% heard God speak afresh, 100% feel refreshed in Spirit, 50 people have some physical healing, 120+ have some spiritual healing, 100% felt renewed and committed more to Church, 95% said they were more compelled to share the Gospel, 60-70% were definitely going to start a small group, 3 indicated they may start a group, 60% felt the Pastoral care workshop gave them more energy for caring, 50% felt bolder in prayer after the Prayer workshop.

There lots of hidden individual stories in all this; and all are part of ongoing discipleship. The potent mix of lives touching lives and God touching all...

Mike Cotterell



Conference participants in the Diocese of East Ruwenzori

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