

## *The God Who is There* reports from South Africa, April 2015

### **One of the groups in Edgemead parish has almost completed Book One and will soon be moving onto book 2 - New Community. Andrew Juries reports:**

We are a very small group of 3 families (husband and wife) and another couple who travel and attend when they are not out of Town.. The feedback of the group was very positive. We spent more time on each topic than allocated to it because the programme allowed for lots of discussion and introspection. We enjoyed spending time reminding ourselves what our faith is about and going back to the basics. At times we would spend up to 3 sessions covering a topic and thoroughly enjoyed it. I did mention to the group that I will find out more info about the next book and they are all excited about the next book.

We are a relatively mature group with no new Christians or unchurched people and therefore when we came to the session on commitment we recommitted ourselves. The first book covered all the Christian basics that were covered in courses life Alpha. However, this was the aim of our parish to get everyone in the church to be on the same page. There was mixed feedback from some of the groups who felt that the course was too basic and that they have done it before. We were aware that the aim of the first book was especially geared for the unchurched or new comers to the faith. We are now looking forward to Book 2 – New Communities....

### **St Cyprian's Parish in the Diocese of Cape Town, South Africa were recently trained in *RinJ Junior* and *The God Who Is There (Beyond Ourselves)*. St Cyprian's (ACSA) Retreat report prepared by Dr Michelle Burrows:**

As the mentor to the Young People's Ministry (YPM) Desk at St Cyprian's Retreat, I am faced with many requests and challenges. In response to one of the many requests, namely to facilitate parent child communication, as a parish we decided to utilise the Beyond Ourselves programme.

At our church we have a three year confirmation process. The first year is for Grade 8 learners or 13 year olds. In this year the focus is on many life skills topics. As a community we have realised that parenting skills are needed as many parents believe that they are alone in this task. I subscribe to the concept of Ubuntu and the African proverb that it takes a village to raise a child. Tutu expounds on Ubuntu in the following way:

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

In the light of the above we chose to use the *Beyond Ourselves* programme as a pilot and made it compulsory for this group and their parents. We, however, did not make it exclusive to this group and the congregation were free to join us. We therefore started in February 2015 and chose to meet only twice a month from 17h00-18h30 every second and fourth Sunday evenings. This would give the families sufficient time to implement the exercises after each session.

The first session we separated the young people from the adults. Their discussions were therefore age specific. The second session we chose to meet as one integrated group. After this the facilitators evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches and we observed the following:

The separate groups should have worked better in theory because of the generation gap and family dynamics but we found that the young people were very interested in what the older folk had to say as this type of conversation does not happen in their homes. Some young people also felt "safer" speaking about certain issues with their parents present.

The third session had to be postponed as we had our scheduled annual vestry meeting so we only met the fourth Sunday in March 2015. We chose to again have it in one group and we had a good time. The young people are finding their voices and the parents are learning to listen.

The Beyond Ourselves programme is very adaptable to any community and we are thoroughly enjoying how we are getting to know each other at a deeper level. The discussion topics are very relatable and we are growing our faith. Many parents are amazed that we can discuss these sorts of ideas in the safe space called the church.

*We have been requested to run a training course in TGWIT and RinJ Junior for the weekend of 2-4 October 2015. The Diocese would like to train as many people as possible. Bishop Steve Moreo is giving his full support for this to happen.*

Estelle Adams, Growing the Church, April 2015

