



	Name: Derek and Jane Waller
	Location: Diocese of Toliara, Madagascar
	Our call: To make disciples and encourage young Christians
	Our role: Derek is the diocesan coordinator of disciple making. Jane is exploring possible roles in adult education while also working alongside Derek.



Dear friends,

Like us!

It happened at our sixth meeting in Ankilifaly. Until then the members of the group had always sat in the same places, next to those they were most comfortable with. However, that sixth week they decided to sit with others. After all the swapping of places, some ended up back next to the person they had started with but they all got there in the end. And there was laughter. Not laughter at each other but instead a friendly laughter that comes from being at home with each other. I thought to myself that we were now a community rather than a group of individuals and that this group would hold together and go on to grow together.

This was one of the two discipleship groups that Derek began at the end of May, using “Rooted in Jesus”, a course designed for Africans. These are pilot groups designed to help us get to know Rooted in Jesus from the inside before training others to use it – there is no better way to really understand a course than to teach it. We also wanted to see the impact of this course on people’s lives here. To help us with this, we conducted

short interviews with members of the group at Ankilifaly and we want to share some of their comments with you.

First a little about Ankilifaly itself. It’s a bustling district in the heart of the city of Toliara. The narrow road through Ankilifaly is always busy with pedestrians, cyclists, posiposy (cycle rickshaw), motorbikes and the odd car or lorry. This street is lined by stalls, each tending to specialise – one might sell piles of screws of all sizes, another umbrellas or flip-flops. There are also street vendors selling snacks such as samosas or mokary (a deep fried sweet bread made from rice). Turn off down one of the various narrow paths and you enter a warren of makeshift homes packed tightly together. The temperatures in the hot season must be unbearable.

Situated next to this busy road is St Luke’s, the first Anglican Church to be founded in Toliara, 45 years ago. The group members were carefully chosen by the minister, Rev Noely, as potential future leaders. What do they say



Top: A street view of Ankilifaly

Above: The Rooted in Jesus group in session





Above left: Andry

Above right: Ankilfaly church



about Rooted in Jesus? We first asked them why they came.

- “I came because I want to be with Jesus Christ. I want to follow on with Jesus until my end. I want to live in praise of Jesus.” (Andry, a young man, 22 years old, a student and single.)

- “I came to Rooted in Jesus so that my life can be changed because the faith inside me is not enough. This course makes me learn so that my faith can grow.” (Andrienne, 38 years old, married and mother of five children.)

- “Before I came to Rooted in Jesus, I just came to pray at church on Sundays but there was no time to learn the Bible. Nobody was teaching me.” (Saintia, aged 28, married and the mother of one.)

In the nine sessions we have covered so far, we’ve been looking at the foundation of our faith. Topics include: God knows us and loves us, the problem of sin, the person of Christ and how we can respond to him. We are also looking at the work of the Holy Spirit in assuring us of God’s love, living within us, helping us to overcome temptation and knowing we are

forgiven. We’ve also just begun to look at prayer, Bible reading and fellowship. For each session there is a Bible verse to learn, a demanding task especially for those more advanced in years but one they enjoy. What have they learnt so far? Let’s hear from our three members again.

- “I’ve learnt about temptation. As a young man I am tempted. The memory verse about temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) helps me to resist. This verse makes me strong when temptation is in front of me. There is no temptation that is too difficult for us.” (Andry)

- “Since coming to Rooted in Jesus, there have been some changes in my life. Now I like to read the Word of God and I learn the memory verses every night. Because I read the Bible every day it is making my family understand too. I can show them a good way to live.” (Andrienne)

- “My life is changing because God knows me and loves me. He knows everything that I do. This makes me happy because whatever is happening in my life, my heart is full of peace. He is my shepherd who takes care of me.” (Saintia)

It’s easy to paint African Christians as either “super saints” whose faith puts us western

Christians in the shade or, on the contrary, believing that Christianity in African is only skin deep. What strikes us here is that the group members are not much different from us. They readily admit to their lack of knowledge of the Bible. They muddle up the Gospel of John for the Epistles and few know their way around the Old Testament. The pressures that they face may be more extreme than ours but they revolve around the same things. A lack of money is a constant worry for many (e.g. one group member walks for two hours each way to get to the cathedral group because he can’t afford other means of transport). And relationships are often fraught – one member’s husband recently told her to leave although happily they are back together again. They worry about their children’s future and often ask for prayer for them. For them, like for us, following Jesus is tough.

What we delight in is their desire to grow and learn. As we open up the Scriptures together, we all open our lives up to God and to one another and there is a wonderful sense of breaking down barriers. There is a delightful democracy about studying God’s word together and praying for one another. Yes, we all bring our cultural assumptions with us – how could we not? But

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Items for praise

- We are delighted to be in our permanent home on the cathedral compound. We thank God for the warm welcome we have received to our new home and the opportunities it has given us to build relationships.
- Thank God for the two Rooted in Jesus groups that have started and for the openness of the participants.
- Discipleship training is a key priority for this diocese and for the Province of the Indian Ocean of which Madagascar is a part. It's good to be part of this bigger initiative.

Items for prayer

- Please continue to pray for growing competence in Malagasy for us. Learning the language really is important for building relationships and for our work.
- Please pray for Jane as she plans and starts English teaching; especially pray for wisdom in prioritising who to teach.
- Pray for the launch of Rooted in Jesus at the diocesan meetings from 3-12 September. Derek and his assistant Zafy have many opportunities to speak about the course.
- Presidential elections are planned before the end of 2018. Pray that these will be peaceful.



Above: Zafy, the assistant leader, with two group members

we are all equal before God and his Word. Forming communities seeking to live under the Word of God is such a privilege and so important.

What next for us? Derek's role is to spread discipleship training across this large diocese in the south of Madagascar. This process will begin with a launch of Rooted in Jesus in September at the various annual diocesan meetings (including the Mothers' Union). This time is the only occasion that the diocesan leaders come together each year because travel is so difficult. Derek's aim is to inform and enthuse key diocesan leaders about this programme. From October he will start to run courses to train Rooted in Jesus group leaders on a parish by parish

basis (there are 10 parishes and over 90 churches in total).

In addition to supporting Derek with Rooted in Jesus, Jane will begin the much desired and needed work of teaching English to various key groups in the diocese. She hopes to start in September.

So exciting and challenging days lie ahead of us. We appreciate your prayers and would love to hear your news.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

Derek & Jane

PS: We've discovered that you can also send letters to us, although they will take at least a month to arrive. Our email addresses are below and the postal address is: B.P. 408, 601 Toliara, Madagascar

You can give online to Derek and Jane at:
churchmissionsociety.org/waller

Contact details:
revdwaller@gmail.com
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Left: Saintia