

Deep Roots Uganda and St Peter's

Deep Roots was begun by Dave Renno, a member of St Peter's, along with Ugandan Asanasio Kainje. As a church, over the last two decades, we have prayed over their remarkable efforts in helping young Ugandans grow deep roots in Christ and some of us, individually, support them financially currently. Since Dave's sudden death in his early forties, in 2017, the team of four Ugandans have risen to the challenge of continuing the work despite losing Dave's visionary and strategic thinking. During 2020 Asanasio has led the team well, coming up with innovative responses to the circumstances sculpted by Covid-19 and the disturbances prior to elections in January 2021.

Founded to address the needs of young Ugandans becoming Christians but not receiving support afterwards to develop, Deep Roots encourages their questions and helps them find answers which are rooted in the Bible, expressed through local illustrations and delivered in interactive groups.

- offers small group Christian discipleship (**N**ow **W**e **A**re **S**aved)
- provides training for leaders (NWAS leaders and Ambassadors)
- broadcasts Christian teaching in local language and English
- "We see Deep Roots as a Bible college reaching people wherever they are." (Participant)

December 2019

The team successfully ran two sessions of Ambassador training workshops 9th- 11th 16th- 18th December 2019 on "Having a better understanding of who the Holy Spirit is"

- 51 Ambassador trainees attended the first session
- 50 different Ambassador trainees attended the second session
- Training provided the opportunity for people to develop good relationships and fully participate

Testimonial from Mr Mudoko Erne:

"Throughout my life as a Christian who has been attending church service Sunday after Sunday, I had not known what the fruit of the Holy Spirit is. Our Church has been emphasizing the need for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Basing on such teachings, I have been praying hard to God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and never given a thought to the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is from this Ambassador training workshop that I have learnt about the fruit of the Holy Spirit and how important this is in a Christian life. I have been challenged and feel that if the church leaders / teachers would teach the Christians about the need to bear Fruit of the Holy Spirit, then God would be glorified in every aspect of our lives."

Another participant, Masika Adrne, reported:

"The topic on having a better understanding of Holy Spirit has helped me in many different ways: I have attended some other teachings on the Holy Spirit but the way Deep Roots has presented material is simple and clear. I did not know that the work of the Holy Spirit can be traced clearly in the Old Testament part of the Bible. Most people who teach on the Holy Spirit give references only from the New Testament part of the Bible. It has been a new approach to see the work of the Holy Spirit right from the OT (Holy Spirit working in creation, in preservation of universe, Holy Spirit using people like Gideon, Saul). The work of the Holy Spirit in general has helped me to understand the depth of the words of Jesus when he said 'I will not leave you as orphans but will ask the Father who will send you another helper, the Holy Spirit.' I have developed more trust and confidence that as long as I remain faithful and obedient to God, the Holy Spirit is there to lead and guide me in all aspects of life no matter how difficult."



Ambassador trainees in group session



and all together



Catering organised by the team



and local cooks brought in to provide it.

January 2020

Regular Deep Roots radio programmes at the start of 2020, on Radio Messiah, featured “How should we Study the Bible”. This was prior to the lockdown which stopped Ugandans being allowed to meet in groups.

One listener, Mr. Thabugha Moses, wrote in to say:

“ I am a member of one of the Bible study groups in my Church and we meet in homes. Once in a week, we meet in a home of one of our group members for one hour. The way we have been doing it is that one person will do the talking, more like preaching, and at the end we present our prayer points and off we go. From the time I started listening to Deep Roots presentation on Bible study, I realised we were not doing real Bible study in our group. The next time when we went to meet in our group, I told the members how I was helped as I listened to Deep Roots teaching on the topic of Bible study. I explained that Bible study involves reading the Bible, looking at exactly what the Bible is teaching and practically obeying the teaching. The members picked interest in what I was explaining, which I had learnt from the radio presentation. I added that the purpose of Bible study is not to just read the Bible but to understand what it is saying and learn the right behavior and attitudes from it, and practically to live in ways pleasing to God. Finally, I told them the time when Deep Roots is always on the radio and challenged them to try and listen to the teachings. In our next meeting after my sharing with my group members, they come up with the same testimony as I had told them.

Resulting from this, our Bible study meeting changed and we are benefitting a lot spiritually every time we come together to study the Bible. We see Deep Roots as a Bible college reaching people wherever they are. We know of some people who have travelled long distances, have spent like 2 – 3 years training to learn these things that Deep Roots is trying to teach and have even paid a lot of money as college fees, but God has graciously availed the teaching to us.”



The team record two programmes per week in local language and in English. Messiah Radio reaches a population of 8 million people in Western Uganda and the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

February 2020

NWAS (Now We Are Saved) school and community groups started to meet again in the new school year in February 2020. The Deep Roots team on **14th March ran a training workshop for key NWAS leaders**, at Kamaiba Youth Centre. 61 participants from 23 schools / institutions took part. An important innovation that NWAS groups have introduced to Ugandan young people has been to encourage them to ask questions and not keep quiet (as normally expected in local culture) listening to their elders/ leaders. Leaders are expected to be people who know things even though they may have had little or no training. If someone does ask a question and the leader does not know the answer, they would tend to make up an answer on the spot. Servant leadership is a key theme in Deep Roots, involving welcoming questions and looking into the Bible together for answers. The team called the workshop Faith Development.

On the subject of understanding faith, participant Joly Mafunguru reported:

“This is a true, life touching and changing teaching. It is like a mirror through which one is able to see his or her Christian life and the stage at which faith is. Personally, I am very much helped and I am sure I am going to help many more people to understand their faith.

While I have just been hearing some of my fellow participants give examples that refer to other people or church leaders who do not welcome questions, I must admit I am one of such leaders who after knowing that I may not be having an answer, then I do not feel comfortable allowing people to ask questions. Too bad of me. I am feeling pain on my heart that my not welcoming questions has led some Christians to join cults or sects, trying to find the truth of what they believe.

Again, this teaching on Faith Development has put a challenge on my heart to be a student of God’s word so that I am more equipped to have an answer to the questions when asked and where I cannot answer, I should encourage the one asking that together we move on to ask other mature Christians to find the truth on the question asked.

How I wish and pray that Deep Roots work will continue now so that more people are helped. I want to recommend the good work Deep Roots is doing in schools, equipping young people from whom the leaders of our nation, the church and general community are nurtured. May God open more gates in schools.”

March / April 2020

Covid-19 lockdown began in Uganda on 31st March. Education establishments, churches, other places of worship, businesses (except supermarkets, outdoor markets, petrol stations and other essential services) were closed. All public transport including motorbike taxis and the use of private vehicles were banned. Policing was harsh, resulting in injury and some deaths. On 5th May some restrictions were eased but without transport little change occurred. On 7th May flash floods in the Kasese area caused significant loss of life, property and livelihoods. Against this background, in April, Asanasio, leader of the Deep Roots team, reported :

1. “We have asked the radio administration to do some replays as we see how the situation goes on.
2. We are trying to use phone calls to encourage different members like the NWAS group members and the Ambassadors to use this time to be reading / studying the material on their own. And, also, to pray for God's healing up the whole world.

3. Joseph and I are using this time to work on material especially as we were to have Ambassador training in May 2020 on having a better understanding of the Trinity. So, we are individually working on this topic and share ideas on the phone.”

May - October 2020

Innovative strategies to adjust to the pandemic

In May the Ambassador workshops could not be held due to continuing restrictions so the team worked on producing a shorter version for radio broadcasting in which they encouraged listeners to write in with questions which the team would then address. Once President Museveni lifted transport restrictions on 21st July, the team were able to get to the office to start recording and thereafter the workshop programmes began to be broadcast, generating questions from listeners. By October, Asanasio reported :

“We have started to use phone calls to follow up both the Nwas members, the Ambassadors and other community members who are serious and need more explanation regarding our radio teachings. The follow up goes deeper than just saying hello. For instance, when we started the radio teaching on the Trinity, the aim was like a training for the Ambassadors preparing for the residential workshop that could not take place due to COVID-19, and so we encouraged the listeners to always put down some questions where they are not understanding and send them to us. Following this, we have received some calls needing more explanation and the only way we have had to respond back is putting enough airtime on the phone of the staff member who will give the explanation. So, this means that what is spent on airtime will be high in these months of COVID-19.”

A second strategy has been the introduction of Deep Roots broadcasts on another radio station, Ngeya Radio (with a reach of 4 million), in addition to Radio Messiah, on different days of the week. This has broadened the audience to people who had not previously been aware of Deep Roots, some of whom have contacted the team to express the help they have found in these broadcasts.

A third innovation has been the installation of a modest solar panel at the home of Asanasio to enable him to charge his laptop instead of having to send it by motorbike taxi to town to be charged. Solar power was very beneficial during lockdown and during a period of acute illness and in general terms, it has also cut down on time spent rewriting ideas initially written by hand then transferred onto the laptop in the office. Asanasio often comes up with ideas at home. In common with much of the local population, Asanasio did not have any electricity previously.

How effective has Deep Roots been during the crisis of lockdown?

“While there was no chance for Ugandans to get to church or any fellowship, the material they got from Deep Roots training has continued to be of great use to them and their families. “

A Deep Roots Ambassador called Neson said :

“Now that Christians have no chance to get to church and pray together, we have continued to meet in our home for Sunday prayers as a small family and so the experience of learning in small groups that I have had with Deep Roots has helped me organise the family prayer meeting and encourage every member to contribute to the discussions and in fact we have been using Deep Roots material in our meetings.”

The team heard from Kamusithiu that he is thankful to God that Deep Roots training is making him able to guide his family members correctly as they meet to study the Bible. He said he is hopeful that other fellows that have trained with Deep Roots must be finding the joy of using the teaching and skills given by Deep Roots in reading and studying God's word as they meet in their families.

The Deep Roots/Nwas training approach of having written teaching material has made it stand out compared to other training programmes in the community, allowing people to read and easily remember and reflect correctly on things and easily pass on the teaching to another person.

Deep Roots radio programmes were even more effective and relevant during this time and people asked to have Deep Roots teachings on CDs for them to access and play.

November 2020

Key Nwas leader training took place in different venues in November, on 7th November in Maliba, on 14th in Bwera and on 21st in Deanery. Each time the Nwas leaders were in groups of just over ten. These are strategic people and having the trainings in different areas in small numbers was helpful for Covid security. The planned fourth training day on 28th in Kisinga was cancelled due to illnesses in the Deep Roots team and a sharp rise in Covid-19 in the area.

The team reported :

“Maliba Zone was well attended and the teaching on the Holy Spirit was really powerfully received. It was exciting to most of the participants discovering how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers to enable them to live as Christians and live a life pleasing to God. It was also encouraging for the participants to learn that even when we have the Bible, God's word, He is the Holy Spirit that helps us to interpret it properly and apply its teaching in our day to day living, making it very important that we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit all the time. In this current situation where COVID-19 has made it hard to meet for fellowship, the Holy Spirit is there as our teacher when reading and studying the word of God. And so, we are not left as orphans.”

QUOTES FROM Nwas LEADERS in TRAINING:

Ogie had this to say "I am amazed knowing how the Holy Spirit is very practical in our lives. I now understand that a Christian life that is lived without the guidance of and obedience to the Holy Spirit is meaningless and so cannot yield any good outcome. It is really encouraging and helpful to know that even when one is alone and very quiet in their room, the Holy Spirit is there to guide, teach, comfort and lead one to the truth. The Holy Spirit is not about big numbers but starts with individuals.”

Mr. Bazerio said:

“The Church leadership is responsible for the poor spiritual life of its Christians by failing to give them real teaching on who the Holy Spirit is and His work in the life of believers. If believers were helped to know such teachings like we have had today, I am very sure there would strong, committed and serious disciples of the Lord Jesus and the work of building His kingdom would be done in a more powerful way. Christian life would be lived out in a very powerful practical way and people's faith and trust in God would be more.”



November workshops
for key Nwas leaders





December 2020

Due to a rise in Covid-19 and to pre-election tensions, the Deep Roots team were not able to visit community and school NAWAS groups in this final month of the school year. However, planning for Ambassador training, broadcasting a Christmas message on Messiah Radio and broadcasting the NAWAS programme on Ngeya Radio were possible. The team also supported by phone leaders in training and listeners enquiring from hearing radio programmes .



NWAS groups

