

## SOMA short term mission to Lainya Diocese, southern Sudan

**November 10-21 2006**



Sharing of Ministry Abroad (SOMA) is a small Anglican mission society, formed in the late 1970s. At that time many were experiencing the renewal of the Holy Spirit, and the call was to share this dynamic and enabling spirituality beyond the shores of the UK. SOMA is now international, and the current International Director is the Bishop of Jos in Nigeria.

SOMA responds to an invitation from a Bishop by sending a self-financing team to the host diocese. The themes vary greatly, depending on the culture and history of the host.

**This team travelled at the invitation of Bishop Peter Amidi of Lainya, Sudan,** whose remit was

*“ The Enabler to traumatized Community. Topics:-*

- a) Resolution of conflicts and promotion of reconciliation.*
- b) pursuing Inner healing-spiritual counselling and trauma healing.*
- c) Cultivating culture of intimacy with God-Quiet times and habit of meditation in the life of a pastor.*
- d) The growth of ecumenical fellowships and the approach to strengthen that given our denominational differences.*
- e) Peace Building, The advocacy role: Justice, Peace and Reconciliation”*

**Just over 200 were able to register**, and 180 attended day by day. This was most of the leadership of the diocese, clergy and lay. A handful will have had a form of tertiary education, some will have been to secondary school, some to a few years of primary school – so the context was one of adults without many of the educational skills we take for granted in a large gathering of Christian leadership.

**Our key resource** was the SOMA manual “Living as a Prophetic Community” (LPC), and this proved a vital and wisely gauged biblical syllabus. We left nine copies for the key diocesan leaders.

### This report

is more full than usual because:

- (1) we wish to share as much as possible with our 'cloud of intercessors'. Over 40 homes were networked daily in Matthew's parish, and this network was part of a nation-wide band of intercessors, which in turn is part of an international network.
- (2) the experience had many depths and dimensions for each member of the team. For many months each of us will be exploring all we received and this is our 'shared diary'.

### The team members were

Revd Matthew Grayshon (leader)  
 Canon Jethro Ssebulime (Uganda)  
 Mrs Loi Ssebulime (Uganda)  
 Canon Edith Ssemambo (Uganda)  
 Canon Benon Ssemambo (Uganda)  
 Revd Peter Makewa (Kenya)  
 Mr David Sharland (CMS mission partner based in Sudan)  
 Mrs Heather Sharland (CMS mission partner based in Sudan)

### The programme ran thus:

<b>Sat 10<sup>th</sup></b>		team planning day
<b>Sunday</b>		to various churches; meet Bishop in evening
<b>Mon</b>		205 folk register for 'seminar'
	am	<b>welcomes; introductions</b>
		<b>review experience and recap since SOMA mission of 2004,</b> David
	aft	<b>Relationships and Marriage:</b> Jethro and Loi
<b>Tues</b>	am	<b>Exile and Return:</b> Matthew
	aft	<b>Relationships and Marriage:</b> Jethro and Loi
<b>Wed</b>	am	<b>Confession, come Holy Spirit:</b> Matthew
	aft	<b>Spirituality:</b> Benon and Edith
<b>Thur</b>	am	<b>Spirituality:</b> Benon and Edith; <b>Standing firm:</b> Peter
	aft	<b>Posters:</b> David and Heather
<b>Friday</b>	am	<b>Standing Firm:</b> Peter
	aft	<b>Communion; Woman at the Well:</b> Matthew
<b>Sat</b>		
<b>Sunday 18<sup>th</sup></b>		to various churches
<b>Mon</b>		debrief

## Saturday: Team planning and bonding

It was important that we came together as a team: Peter was on his own, and whilst the Ugandans know each other well, two of them did not know they were coming until the Thursday; David and Heather were new to us all.

It was important that we Listened and planned together for the week. The Lord gave us an intense, delightful and Spirit-led morning:

- We noticed that a mark on the wall was the same shape as Sudan: wasps had laid their eggs in the wall and sealed them in with honey. Here was a promise of new birth and sustaining Spirit for the Diocese.
- We were visited by an old lame man, carrying his belongings in a bag on a stick over his shoulder. He was seeking alms. Here was a reminder that all attending the seminar were needy both in material things and spiritually.
- We were visited by Tujuoc, a Sudanese Intercessor, who having heard of the Diocesan Conference had come expressly to pray with and for us. A member of the Shillock people who have a long serving and much respected king, Tujuoc has been called out of the army to ordination and now to Intercession. He has been given a prayer mountain at Kaia (sw Sudan): a holy place of huge flat rocks and mighty trees. Tujuoc prayed on his knees, beginning, "Majesty....."
- Benon prayed for the souls of 7 people who had been buried alive in the vicinity
- Edith told the story of a baby boy who grew up in prison and who did not want freedom when his mother was released when he was 10 years old
- the UK intercessors had a picture of crushed grass in a compound: all those attending the conference had been crushed in some way by the history of their land
- another UK intercessor had the promise of Is 60v1 "Arise Shine". Matthew saw this as a call to stand to honour the King. Loi perceptively heard this as invitation to be released from burdens and to stand in freedom
- Benon said we were not here to lay a foundation, we were living bricks called to be piled up and joined together: like the memorial church of Lazarus (the name of Lainya's octagonal cathedral)



The Cathedral Church  
of Lazarus,  
holes in roof  
are from shrapnel



## Sunday evening

Bishop Peter introduced himself and his vision for the Diocese:

He came to the Diocese in 2001 as Vicar General and was made Bishop in 2003. There were many problems of leadership because of the disruptions of civil war and guerrilla war. The life of the church had somehow continued and survived.

There had been a big meeting for all the pastors in 2001. It was a meeting of hearts and minds. It was a big reconciliation conference.

The impact of the 2004 SOMA team had been great. Walls of hostility had been broken, renewal and vibrancy had been given to the life of the diocese. A team had been commissioned to go to the then deserted town of Bereka.

2004-2006 a great thing happened: Peace. Real peace. This brought great challenges, perceived and unexpected.

The Enabler of Traumatized Communities was at work:

- the Lords Resistance Army had displaced parishes, destroyed properties, killed people.
- three archdeaconries had seen internal displacement, and clergy desert their charges
- but the church had been close to the people, advocates for the people, the church has worked hard for peace
- one of the first cracks which showed was in the leadership: "we have so many somewhat trained people, and many in training in Uganda, but there have been losses of church personnel since peace"
- the power of prayer is beginning healing in the community
- these humble people are the cause of 3000 confirmations a year. There is a tremendous New Front Line: baptism.
- Lainya is convergence point for Sudanese People's Liberation Army: "These are brothers coming home when we were preparing for Christians to come back! The soldiers are more traumatised than we are."



## Team thoughts

*(from their experience of visiting churches in the morning)*

Benon had seen a line of ants carrying their belongings. At the front: determined progress; at the back: slower, slower, even some being carried. One was still and we (Benon and Edith) prayed. Suddenly he arose and caught up, they all went into the grass.

Edith said this was the Bishop leading his people forward. All will come with him.

Peter had a stone and a shell case to take home. "This is Sudan to me."

Bishop Peter said Benon had preached on Nehemiah and there was great repentance, (especially one girl who turned to other god when ill).

Peter had ascended hill behind the church: as went up obstacles became smaller when on the ground they had been so big; he had thought about the theology of the eagle; we need a discipleship which makes many challenges in perspective.

David and Heather reported a Colonel had come to church to address the villagers about matters of policing and ID cards. He sat in the front row and heard the gospel. Personally moved, he said "this is not the time for a political speech".



The small cross roads town of Lainya with cathedral central

Few had English so all the teaching was translated – which promotes clarity of thought, conciseness and rapport.



**Relationships and Marriage** afternoons Monday and Tuesday  
(from LPC section C.3)

Jethro and Loi gave biblical teaching on relationships and Christian marriage and family life. They explored traditional and cultural views. They helped people look at the painful disruptions of the last few years, as well as the many ways relationships and marriage had reverted to old expectations and practices.

The 200 attendees found this challenging and even disturbing. There was a continual hum of conversation and waves of reaction.

We observed that:

1. most had little formal education so the telling of stories and recounting of personal circumstances was vital for understanding and looking ahead and changing expectations and practices
2. men and women sat apart and were not used to interacting in this way and over such subjects
3. there was no 'conference culture' ie the attendees were working out how to be together and how to listen and how to discuss.

Perhaps what was most helpful and formative in these sessions was the testimony demonstrated by the enduring and companionable marriages of Jethro and Loi as well as Benon and Edith.

Perhaps too, their modelling of Christian intimacy and relationship in marriage was a metaphor showing how to live as a the bride of Christ as church (people gathered together) and how to live as the bride of Christ as individual Christians.

Jethro and Loi are not sure how well they contributed to the conference – and whilst they had great difficulties in 'holding their audience' in fact they were sowing important seeds in what we believe to be promising and nourishing ground.



## Exile and Return Tuesday morning

(from LPC section D)

Matthew led the conference through the story of the Babylonian Exile.

We imagined ourselves to be the Israelites: either the educated leaders who had been taken to Babylon, or the land-dwelling Israelites who had stayed behind. The headlines were put on a flip chart with Bari translation alongside.



We used Isaiah (eg 1v7 a devastated country, 5.26ff another country will over-run you). To symbolise Babylon we all turned round and faced west. And asked what it was like to be in exile.

We told the stories of the faithful in exile: Daniel, the Fiery Furnace. We thought about our own people who had fled in exile (to Nairobi, Kampala, and Europe) who had gone far away and settled and done well.

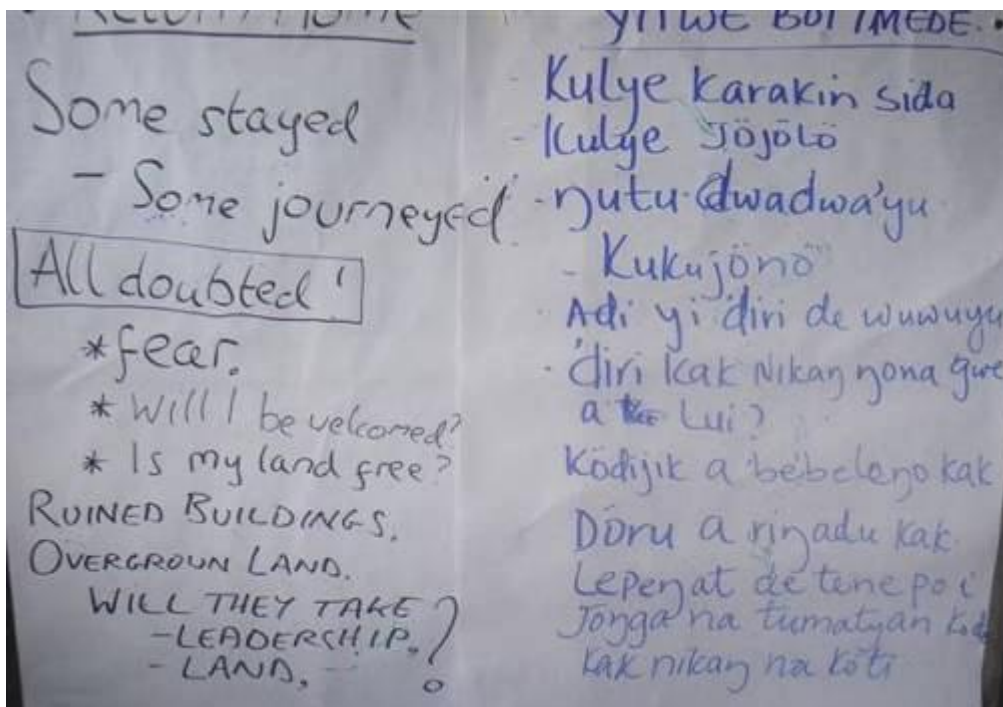
We heard the promises of Return: the dry bones – this story totally engrossed and captivated and moved all who were there. (The speaker was on the edge of tears all the way through).

We looked at what it was to either Return, or to be those who had Stayed. How would the two parties come together?

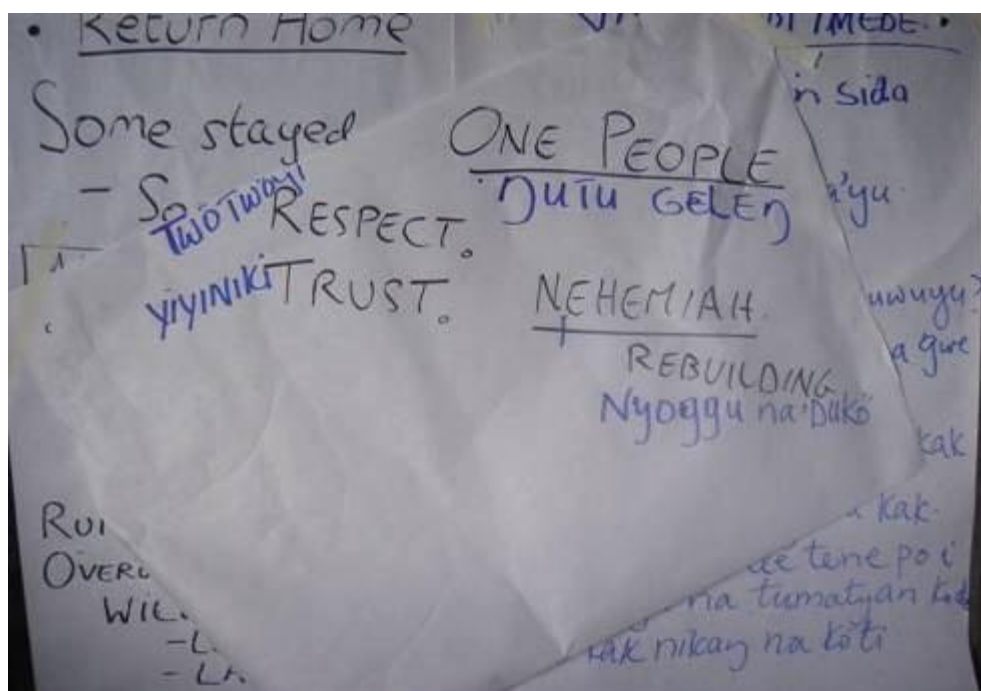
We reflected on the reasons for exile: notably

- the plight of the innocent caught up in the sins of others (whether their leaders or foreigners)
- satan as a lion roaring seeing who he can consume
- conflict in the heavenlies (Eph 6)
- the end times (Mt 24)
- not because God punishing his faithful (cf Rom 3, Rom8: nothing can separate us)

Our conclusion was that the sufferings in Sudan were partly because of the sins of others, and partly a sharing in Christ's suffering



After Exile: We looked at the place of the new Jerusalem, the one built of living stones, with Jesus the cornerstone, which for full glory needs all the living stones. Lainya is the new Jerusalem. We mentioned Nehemiah:



We ended on Isaiah 60 "Arise shine for your light has come" and received the Lord's promise of a new beginning, of him gathering his sons and daughters, and sought the promise that "no longer would you be forsaken, desolate".

We received the promise that Lainya would be a beacon (60v3) because "others will come to see ... the wealth of the nations will come to you ... the light will shine upon you..."

**We thank the Lord for a powerful and significant almost 4 hours, where we lived the story of an ancient people and found it was our story, where we heard the promises of a covenant Lord and claimed them for ourselves.**

## Confession Wednesday am (from LPC section B.2)

The SOMA conference of 2004 found confession to be vital for the release of hope and vision. Some 40 of the present conference had been present for the powerful symbolic exercise used then (attaching sins to a wooden cross and setting fire to it), so another approach was adopted.

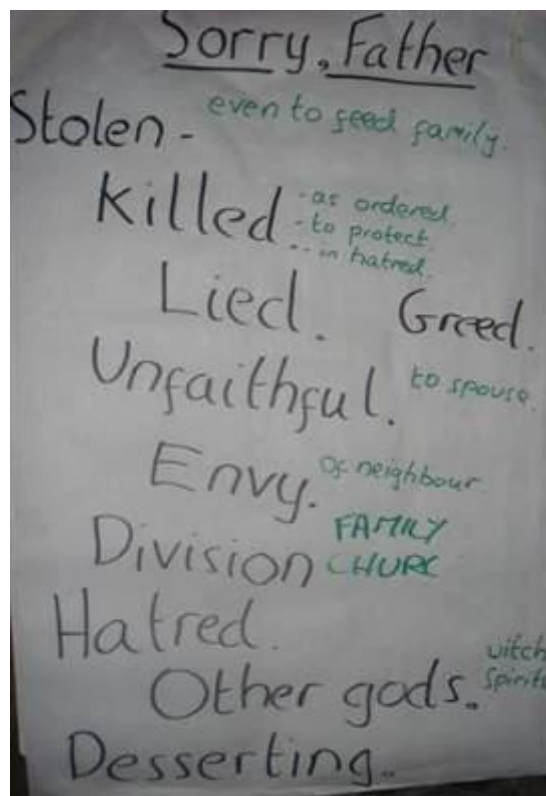


Simple teaching was given about the cross, and on the name of Jesus being greater than any sin or memory.

Gradually people identified the sins of many over many years. This was painful and honest and broad-sweeping. A summary was put on the flip board.

We then had a time of personal confession. The five priests in the team, together with the bishop sat around the outside of the cathedral, and for an hour people came one by one to make their confession. The confession was oral but understood only by God, unless there was understanding of Bari or Swahili or English.

Absolution was often with the gift of knowledge, was in the name of Jesus and through the power of his blood; and included the laying on of hands for the coming in renewing power of the Holy Spirit.



## Come Holy Spirit

(could have been from LPC section B.3)

This one hour session was a swift overview of the work of the Holy Spirit, with teaching on personal invitation for his indwelling joy and gifting and power.

All stood for to seek the Spirit for the life and work of the church.

There were no clear manifestations of blessing: there was a profound stillness and openness for the ten minutes until the lunch drum was sounded.

**Spirituality** Wed afternoon and Thurs morning  
(from LPC section C.1,2)

Benon and Edith led two sessions in a seamless and engrossing and often very funny double act.

They were enormously gifted in acting our stories and in telling stories. Some examples:



A Ugandan priest went to the UK to study. His wife was writing a letter and his child also wrote, but her letter was squiggles and dashes and dots.

The husband opened the letter with joy but put the piece of 'scrap' paper in the bin. At this we all grieved. Only when he reached the end of his wife's letter did he learn that the paper in the bin was a letter from his two-year old daughter.

Immediately, he retrieved the letter, pored over every pencil marking, and in gratitude pinned his daughter's letter to the board above his desk.

How much more does our Heavenly Father receive our prayers and conversations and communications? Let us not fear to talk with Him.

On the left of the picture is a person who is all head knowledge and not living out the life of love in Jesus

On the right is a person who is all activity and no spirituality. The feet are big and clumsy.

The other person is balanced and useful to God.



**Benon and Edith also spoke movingly of their suffering in the days of Edi Amin and of the Lord's faithfulness to them through the dark years and the years of recovery. With Jethro and Loi this was a compelling witness and encouragement from Ugandans to Sudanese. A witness the European's could not have offered.**

## Spirituality Wednesday morning

There was a 'spare hour' so Matthew led an interactive session exploring just how we have a prayer time, using A.C.T.S. as the framework.

This emphasised the needs once more for

- literacy classes
- reading plans (or distribution of lectionary)
- many more Bibles in homes



David pointed out that subsidised bibles were available from the Diocese for the price of half a chicken (20p). So there was *no excuse for not having one!!* After much laughter and not a little indignation, and once the Bishop had indicated the correctness of David's observation, the point was received with serious intent.

## Standing Firm: Thursday and Friday morning (from LPC section E)

Peter taught well on our dependence on the word and our call to be faithful and true to the gospel.

Using examples from Kenya and Uganda he showed how scripture enabled the church's witness to, and leavening of, society.

He clearly described the opportunity which the southern Sudanese Christians have for a 'fresh start' in forming society.

He also warned against the coming of the cults – he used examples from Kenya as warning. The only antidote is the Word, and the alertness of Christians. Our people must be well taught.

He gave the marks of a cult as being

- new revelation: supplementary to scripture
- undermining of the full deity of Jesus
- undermining of the grace and gift of the cross (including by a subtle blessings theology which urges works and generosity to the 'church')
- diminishment of the person of the Holy Spirit
- aggrandisement and enrichment of the leader

He identified as cults: Mormonism, the Witnesses, some Pentecostals and Islam.

**Again it was significant teaching because it came from an African out of African experience.**

### **The posters: Thursday afternoon**

The posters are drawn and composed by east Africans, and available in most major cities of east Africa. Each of the set of 40 has a large colour painting of one key bible story (the one illustrated is Ruth and Naomi), encircled by six or so supplementary line drawing, and on the reverse is teaching and bible references in five languages. They are A3 and laminated

The previous team made a gift of nine sets, and we did the same.



David and Heather led a stimulating and clear session on use of the posters.

eg You begin by asking, “What is happening in the big picture?” - whether with adults or children, in church or school, in small group or large.

It is then possible to move on to identify the biblical story, to engage with the supplementary drawings, and look at some scriptures.

The goal is to relate one’s own life (whether village or town, young or old, male or female) to the story.

Andy Wheeler has produced a booklet on “how to use the posters” and copies of these were also distributed.

The Bishop was careful to make sure that the eighteen sets of posters were in use and not in termite-safe tin boxes! He also ensured that all the key diocesan groups had a set – archdeaconries, youth, Mother’s Union and others.

## Review: Monday afternoon

### Bishop Peter:

How wonderful the week has been, and God has used team people wonderfully. The Lord has said, "Who can I send" and then he gives the mission.

Short term mission works. After the 2004 SOMA mission he overheard, "Are you rebuilding walls of hostility again?"

The couples gave wonderful testimony.

Christian couples must set example of transformed communities. To revisit the old things (*ie stable life before the civil war*) we need to live. It must start with us as the family of the clergy. One threat to marriages is poverty. eg my husband is not buying me clothes.

Benon has suggested we plant trees – in Uganda in 2005 a thousand trees were planted for retirement of each pastor. They are also important to mark boundaries of church property. This is a good suggestion.

Matthew enabled us to live the journey again. People agreed to refresh their experience. Some were even crying. Our God is really very wonderful. It is hard to leave culture of war without entering time of vengeance.

The Bishop is the centre of unity. Jesus resisted turning temple into market place, The army near the church have been quiet. They are believers. They have stayed quietly. Grateful to army for security. Brigadiers very active behind the scenes. There is a need for a Peace and Reconciliation conference. For the army. For the people. Not necessarily for church people.

It was wonderful that Peter could share the real threats, with live examples from Kenya.

David and Heather's talk was essential: the Bible Posters are vital to the Diocese. We will use in target groups. The older women were really listening when Heather and David looked at the poster of Naomi and Ruth, especially after the journey Matthew had taken us on.

It was the wrong season (*for the conference*) for many spouses – the long lasting rains kept them busy on the land.

Our organisation was good from the second day. There were no communication problems, nor in admin or in the conference.

Other people wanted to join in = a good sign.

Thanks to Edith, Benon, Jethro and Loi, for moving people over the roof appeal.

The conference is nurturing the healing process.



### Heather

This is a special SOMA – settled so much more quickly – good to see how much people have grown over the years. eg Martin (*our willing and hard working team 'steward'*) was so shy and now laughing. Many have gone for studies and were missing. Lainya was silent last time – now coming to life. Good to be a part of the

journey – we were looking forward last time – need to keep re-visiting. Progress has been made. Good to have so many couples on the team. A gentle model has been shown.

### David

Many don't believe in short term mission – but works well – Spirit led really can hit the heart of issues. Risks can be taken eg explore difficulties. Deep spiritual messages come through. Lainya is completely different from 18 months ago. Matthew on Exile and Peter on Stand Firm so key.

### Jethro and Loi

No imagining what Sudan would be like. ?The language barrier was difficult. To go first was a challenge. Don't be scared, try to belong. The Bishop has remained humble. Some new bishops go “up,up,up” yet have been eating and sleeping with us until election. You are a good bishop.

### Edith and Benon

Impressed by calmness – the conditions in which they live – they are bearing it. They are not lamenting. Mama Lynda did all things well – I learned from this. The team work has been good – in cooperation, in living as brothers and sisters. There was no preparation. I arrived in Lainya empty. This was the best beginning. I am impressed by the commitment of the people. eg to cycle 15 miles as old people. God can do for Sudan what He did for Uganda.

### Peter

I felt inadequate – all the senior staff were listening to me! I felt inexperienced compared to rest of team. I learnt about organisation from Bishop. They could study for three days which was helpful. The willingness of people to receive, it was impressive.

### Martin

(our willing and hard working 'steward')

It is a good fellowship. They have moved. They have gained. It is their task as leaders to be examples: how to reconcile. Good to say what troubled them. They expected things to come from outside, now they know their role.

We didn't realise how important it is to Stand Firm. A good warning about cults coming. It is good to see Islam as cult – how they will offer money for nothing (*ie mullahs had been giving out money if people will convert to Islam*) .

The teaching on marriage impressed me very much.

### Matthew

Every SOMA mission brings home the privilege of being alongside church leaders and Christians in another country. Truly every people and language can be one in Jesus. It is extraordinary to stand with the leadership of a diocese and know that in a small way salt and light are being prepared for a new country and for a people who are beginning to restore all the many relationships which make up a church or a village or a town. It is privilege to have such complete trust from a diocesan bishop as a group of strangers stand and teach his leadership team.

There is personal joy and belonging in working with friends from Uganda and Kenya. There is exhilaration and excitement in “stepping out of the boat to walk on the water” and finding the Lord is faithful. As we arrived we were pages of paper with no writing. Each day the Lord wrote what needed to be heard. We were also people who depended on intercessors far away. May they know the Father's pleasure in their hard work.

## Projects

### a. The generosity of the parish meant that

- 1) it was possible to replace the 10 sewing machines given to women who recently completed a 'tailoring' course
- 2) we could meet the travel costs of the African members of the team, and also resolve one or two medical and eye problems
- 3) a gift could be made towards either the completion of the temporary diocesan office or the beginning of the Bishop's house.

### Projects for St Mary's Christian Justice Group to consider:

#### b. literacy

Mama Lynda (the Bishop's wife) v keen on establishing a literacy programme for the women. Her email is [lindapaya@yahoo.com](mailto:lindapaya@yahoo.com)

Recommended programme from Sharlands is **Partners in Literacy** developed by and for Christians and headed by a Kenyan: James Kidgamera

- basic fee \$3000 plus expenses
- other costs: printing and distribution of primers
- PiL have set up one course in Sudan at ?Maridi? and this will give an indication of costs

J Chamwada Kidgamera, PO 16340, GPO 00100, Nairobi; 0722 635 301  
[chamwada@lefkenya.org](mailto:chamwada@lefkenya.org)

It is an adult literacy course – using known words, so learning is faster. James and team visit for two weeks and work v v hard with respondents to put together a primer in the local dialect and alphabet. 90 lessons in three books.

35 lessons: basic literacy

10 lessons: Bible words

15 lessons: on health

15 lessons: on agriculture

15 lessons: on the Bible

#### health includes

safe motherhood	care of teeth
family planning	diarrhoea
first aid	HIV AIDS
mental health	care of baby
oral re-hydration	et al

#### agriculture includes

bee keeping	land preparation
healthy cattle	pests & diseases
harvesting	storage
et al	

#### c. agricultural project

Mama Lynda is keen on an agricultural project both to feed villages and also to create surplus crops for income. David steered Mama away from tractor based projects. Instead he suggested:

- a Rotovator based in a cooperative: £1,500 + maintenance + oil and petrol
- doesn't damage soil or plough too deeply
- has 4 wheel drive so powerful and would help many farms and acres

issues

maintenance programme

management structure for users

getting goods to market (local or Juba) – perhaps a trailer for Bishop's car?

#### d. second hand sewing machines

old second hand Singer treadle and hand sewing machines are well suited to constant use in developing countries. Might it be possible to collect (from eBay, car boot sales, second hand shops et al) and pack such that Unitmatco would ship and UPMB in Kampala would pass on?