



Strategic Working Party Report

SOMA UK's mission statement:

We work for the transformation of individuals and churches and the healing of communities and their lands through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.
We send and receive teams worldwide on short-term mission within the Anglican Communion.

Our task:

Overseas, we facilitate spiritual growth by providing resources and training to help Anglican dioceses become renewed centres of mission within and beyond their own community. This means different things in different places, and we have many stories to tell:

- Working to bring spiritual renewal to dioceses unfamiliar with the work of the Holy Spirit - for example in Kinkiizi, SW Uganda, where teams have visited several times. Each parish in the diocese is now expected to offer the ministry of healing on a regular basis; and the diocese is beginning to send teams to other areas.
- Working to offer training and resources on particular areas of ministry - often during a second visit, when the "renewal groundwork" has been completed, and relationships established. An example is the Diocese of Orlu, Nigeria, where the Archbishop has specifically requested teaching on healing and deliverance.
- Working to bring encouragement and hope to war-torn communities, for example in southern Sudan. SOMA has now worked in 13 dioceses in this diocese. In some cases (as in the Nuba Mountains, and Wau) the SOMA team was the first team to visit the diocese, and provided a rare opportunity for the pastors and lay leaders to come together.
- Working with other SOMA National Bodies. The first time this happened was in 1996 when a SOMA team from 14 different nations went together to Rwanda; the most recent was in 2004 when 13 simultaneous teams ministered to different regions in the Anglican Province of Kenya.
- Working with other mission agencies. SOMA now regularly works in partnership with CMS in Southern Sudan. We are in partnership with Church Army East Africa in the "Soul Nairobi 2006" youth project.

At home, we aim to challenge, refresh and enrich the church in the UK:

- Working with Anglican churches, through the involvement of individuals on teams, through partnership and shared experience with Christians in other parts of the Anglican Communion, and through facilitating visits from experienced practitioners from overseas to churches and dioceses in this country.
- Working with the growing number of churches and groups of all denominations engaged in short-term mission, through sharing of experiences, problems, hopes and resources.

SOMA has been offered to the Archbishop of Canterbury as "a gift to the Anglican Communion". In its present state of fragility, with the centre of gravity of the Communion now in "The South", we value opportunities to channel the energy of these parts of the Communion, to refresh us and to assist us in offering a prophetic ministry to the church and the nation.

Our values

We are pilgrim people who stand in our relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, under the authority of Holy Scripture. We seek to develop and to work within relationships defined not by text but by trust. We work under the authority of the inviting Bishop. Partnership is key to everything we do both at home (working especially with ReSource) and abroad (with other mission agencies, and with outward-looking UK churches). We seek to be in touch with, and open to, the 'cutting edge' of the Holy Spirit's work wherever we perceive this to be.

The structure of our ministry

We see the future ministry of SOMA UK under two headings, each with a number of core components:

SOMA TEAMS

Teams may be outward or inward.
Outward teams fall into 4 types:

- renewal teams
- specialist teams
- pioneering teams
- joint teams

We aim to send 20 outward teams per year.
Associated activities include:

- team recruitment and training
- networking within UK
- networking with host dioceses
- overseas bishops' retreats
- developing written resource materials
- the work of intercession

SOMA SERVICES

We envisage the development of a network of additional activities within the UK:

- consultancy to parishes with opportunities for ministry overseas
- teaching/training on good practice and the principles of cross-cultural mission
- teaching/training on intercession
- mission awareness days
- teaching on the three phases of renewal
- selective networking/partnership with other agencies
- making SOMA resource materials more widely available

All these activities depend on personal links - knowing who the gatekeepers are within the UK.

SOMA UK staffing

The next 18 months will be a time of transition for SOMA UK.

- Don has agreed with the Trustees that he will hand over the responsibility to a successor on 31st December 2006, and will retire from SOMA UK on 17th April 2007.
- The Trustees will draw up a job description for a new National Director, with a view to an appointment towards the end of 2006, so that there is a handover period.
- It is likely that the SOMA UK Office will leave Heath & Reach on 31st December 2006, depending on where the new ND lives.
- The new ND will need to have the experience and profile to engage with bishops and archbishops, to identify gatekeepers at home and abroad, and to work in partnership with the directors of the other national SOMA bodies and key mission organisations.
- In addition to the ND we believe that a new Assistant Director is needed, as and when funding becomes available, to work under the leadership of the ND in an executive capacity, developing the ministry of SOMA teams and SOMA services. Either position may be part time, but it is essential that the primary passion of both ND and AD be the ministry of SOMA within the Anglican Communion.
- Other staffing may be part time or outsourced, depending on the future location of the office and on funding. Mary's contribution is crucial at the present time.

Funding

During the last few years the financial climate for UK churches and mission agencies has changed rapidly, and like others, SOMA has been affected by this. The recent reduction in our staffing has been in large measure a consequence of a failure to address this trend and take appropriate corrective measures.

We have sought deliberately to operate a lifestyle of simplicity and pilgrimage, as we believe that only thus can we have any credibility with the people with whom we work. But we cannot go on unless we identify and engage new sources of financial support. Continuing in "the old way" will militate against the ability to adapt our ministry, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the face of present opportunities and challenges.

Specific recommendations from the SWP to facilitate the development of SOMA Teams and SOMA Services in the context of an appropriate financial strategy are included as supporting documents.

¹ We suggest dropping the full name on our papers and retaining just the acronym – reminding us of the body of Christ, of the meanings in different languages of the word SOMA (eg read, sip water, rejoice)