

This week, SOMA hosted a four-day Consultation in Cape Town for 210 Christian leaders from 30 nations. While most of them were Anglicans, there was a strong ecumenical representation. They came to study and examine a remarkable and rapidly spreading move of God that is touching every continent. This move is not only revitalising and growing churches - that has happened before - but is transforming the social, political, educational and economic structures of the cities and towns where it is occurring. In a number of cases, transformation has even occurred in the physical land.

What makes this well-documented move of God's power so extraordinary is that it is beginning to provide effective solutions to many of the desperate needs and challenges in today's world: disease, poverty, corruption, addiction, family disintegration, perversion, and environmental destruction, to name a few. There are even early, medically corroborated reports of people being healed from AIDS coming out of Uganda.

The Consultation listened carefully to people who are living and working on the front lines in some of these transformed cities, as well as others whose careful research has put these stories on the world stage.

The participants gathered in regional groups to ask the same question as the bystanders at Pentecost: "What does this mean?" They grappled with questions such as

"How can God use me as an instrument for His purpose?"

"How can such transformation flow into my life, my family, my church, my city, and my nation?"

"How can the wineskin of our church heritage contain this new wine?"

"Since community transformation normally occurs when local churches are closely united in vision and purpose, how can we join hands with believers from different traditions from our own?"

The participants met in 6 regional clusters - representing the West, Southern Africa, East Africa, West and Central Africa, Asia, and Latin America. There was also a bishops' group. Each group presented a report of their own intentions upon their return home. God spoke to us clearly and challengingly over these four days. What was striking were the many common features of these reports, despite their geographical, cultural and contextual diversity.

Here is what we heard:

Vision

Our vision has been too narrow, often to our local church or diocese. God is asking us to seek him for a vision for the transformation our cities and nations.

Perspective

We heard God challenging us about how we see reality, and to develop a world-view which will provide the foundation for Him to move in power.

Holiness

God cannot work through unclean and un-submitted vessels. We heard his call to examine ourselves, seek his cleansing, and walk before him in holiness of life.

Humility

The key to seeing God move is humility, through which we recognize our complete dependence on him for everything. God is asking us to increase our hunger and thirst for him, and to grow into true humility.

Prayer & Intercession

Informed and fervent prayer is a key to achieving powerful results. God is calling us to become more committed and passionate in our individual praying. He is asking us to pray informed prayers, based on researching our communities, and to raise up an army of intercessors in our churches and cities to pray for spiritual breakthroughs.

Leadership

At a time when church leadership often appears timid and weak, God summons us to become visionary, courageous and persevering leaders whose hearts are determined to obey, regardless of the cost.

Unity

God loves unity, and promises to pour out blessings when his people come together with common vision and purpose. Most examples of community transformation occur only when these conditions are met. He is asking us to become agents of unity and reconciliation with other branches of the Body of Christ.

Compassion

We heard a clear call for the church to take its gloves and immerse itself in acts of loving and sacrificial compassion in a way that tangibly demonstrates God's love for a needy world.

Youth/Future Generation

God urged us to pass on the baton to the next generation, seeking opportunities to disciple younger people into becoming community transformers.

We hear these admonitions from God issuing from his mercy. They represent an invitation to enter a new and exciting future, in which we can expect to see him move with great power.

We also hear them with a sense of urgency. "Let him who has ears hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church."

The Revd David Harper, SOMA International Chairperson

The Revd Trevor Pearce, SOMA International Deputy-chairperson