

SHARING

The Newsletter of SOMA UK



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."

Bishop Isaac, Bishop Alapayo Kuctiel and Bishop Josphe standing in a new church in bishop Josphe's deanery in Pachong, Rumbek



SOMA visits "Forest Bird"

On 4th May 2006, a multinational SOMA team (Kenyan, Scottish and English) met at Entebbe airport and flew by chartered MAF plane via Lui (to collect David and Heather Sharland of CMS, who happen to have Irish connections!), to Rumbek (the name means "Forest Bird"), one of the most conflict-ridden towns in Southern Sudan. Today it is host to a large UN peace-keeping force from Kenya, China and Bangladesh with many NGOs providing much needed medical and community care. During the 40 years of war, most of the buildings in the town have been destroyed; schools hardly functioned, roads mined and the community infrastructure demolished. In addition, the Anglican Church there has suffered radical divisions (with two other "Anglican" churches being formed), caused not least by the total absence of the previous Bishop.

It took a while for us to locate Bishop Alapayo and his team, who did not know quite when we would arrive! Over the first weekend we met several times with them and we had a chance to get to know one another as well as practice the mile walk to the conference centre! We had an informative time in Rumbek Market on the Saturday afternoon, and were privileged to attend the Sunday morning service in the "Tree Cathedral" - the church is too small to accommodate the 800 or so who come each week, so they meet in the shelter of this huge tree!

The next 5 days were taken up with a conference for clergy and lay leaders from the Diocese. The numbers were smaller than we had been led to expect, but once we had begun to establish relationships with those who came, the Holy Spirit began to speak to them deeply, and through testimony, ministry and worship, the teaching we gave began to take root in their lives. We realised that this Diocese is starting very far back, and that it was going to take a committed long-term partnership to bring hope in an atmosphere of despair.

A military mindset

During our discussions, three key themes emerged to be addressed. The first was what was described as a "military mindset". The prevailing group in Rumbek are Dinka Sudanese, traditionally nomadic cattle people, who over recent years have been forced to live a more settled existence. This means that they have a huge, volcanic reservoir of unused energy - which many have channelled into the violence of the civil war, but for others determines the way they think, and frequently explodes into inter-clan violence

Soul Nairobi

6th-13th August 2006

The launch is just over a month away ...

How did "Soul Nairobi" come about? Different streams of thinking have come together to give birth to something unique! Two years ago, teams from all over the world took part in a major mission in dioceses all over Kenya. Over the final weekend, two outreach events were put on in Kamukunji Ground, an open space in the middle of one of the slum areas of Nairobi. We said to ourselves "this place needs redemption" - and a tiny seed of an idea was born.

Around the same time, in London, a major outreach event was taking place called "Soul in the City", with thousands of young people involved from all over UK. It had a unique combination of Christian teaching, community service, and infectious worship. We asked the organisers ("Soul Survivor") if they would be happy for us to use the same idea in Nairobi. Pastors and Youth Leaders all over East Africa (and elsewhere) have been putting on large crusades for years - and many have responded sincerely to the call to give their lives to Christ. But (they have said themselves) the impact of these crusades in Nairobi on the city itself has been negligible. These pastors have said "this is what we have been waiting for!" - and have put their energy behind it.

So, What is going to happen? The original vision was to hold a pilot scheme in one of the slum areas of Nairobi, with maybe 500 young people (mostly from Nairobi) taking part. The network of youth pastors have multiplied the idea by 10! This is what is being planned now:

The whole city of Nairobi has been divided into 6 zones, each with a key church (which will act as the zone base for teaching and outreach events)

Under the leadership of a Zone Pastor, a team of around 1000 Christian young people will receive relevant discipleship teaching each morning of the week by local youth speakers.

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Bringing hope to communities...the force of SOUL NAIROBI 2006

In the afternoons, in teams of 5 or so, they will be involved in localised community projects in the most needy areas in their zone (such as painting community centres; clearing up rubbish; removing graffiti; running kids' clubs; helping set up sports programmes)

For an hour or so from 5pm, each team will be involved in some kind of gathering at their "key church" (to which they can invite people they have met in the afternoon), which gives a chance to reinforce these contacts. The programme will end before nightfall

Who is going to be involved?

All the speakers, zone leaders and planning committee are from Kenya

6,000 - 10,000 young people from Nairobi.
50 - 100 from USA, Australia etc.
30 or so will be going from Uganda.
30 from UK, who with the help of their churches have raised the £1000 or so needed for each person

How much will it cost?

Not suprisingly a project of this kind costs major money. Churches all over Nairobi are being asked to contribute and the organisers are looking for sponsors for different parts of the project. Please take time to read the enclosed flyer to see how we in SOMA UK are trying to help and how you can impact on Soul Nairobi from wherever you are in the UK.

Visiting Forest Bird cont ...

Somehow, if genuine peace is going to come, when "every man can sit under his fig-tree and not be afraid" (as the Old Testament prophet Micah longed for), this mind-set has to be transformed into a mindset of mutual forgiveness and trust.

The second key theme, which we have come across in many parts of Southern Sudan but was graphically expressed in Rumbek, is the sense amongst many Sudanese Christians that the whole country is under God's judgement, and is being punished for its failure to witness more effectively to "the Arabs" (the Moslems in the north). Those of us from the outside feel that the direct witness of many of these Sudanese Christians put us to shame in our luke-warm Western churches - but this is the reality of much of Sudanese Christian life in the Dinka areas. Their songs are amazing, written by each person who becomes a Christian as their "testimony" - but they are fundamentally laments, with very little hope and joy. Somehow the Church has, in midst of appalling and ongoing suffering, to convey also a message of hope, not least by supplementing the present songs with those that lift the spirit away from self to God and what He has done for us in Christ.

The third, and more hidden theme, is that of the prevailing "blood covenants", which many of the young men all over Africa (and elsewhere) enter into as they pass from childhood to manhood. These are not just "clan rituals" - they have deep spiritual significance, and exert great power over the individual, often to do what they would not even contemplate in times of "cool". (Why were the Christians in Rwanda so deeply involved in the 1994 genocide?) Those of us from the West are unable to enter into these deep waters - in Rumbek it was our African team members who were able to testify to what they themselves had been through, and the importance of experiencing release from the power of these ungodly covenants.

Rumbek is hot, challenging, and full of potential! The Diocese want us now to activate a partnership between them and All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi; to hold a special conference for women some time in the next 12 months; and to train their youth leaders! Each of these, as well as helping them to work through the major themes set out above, is enough to occupy someone's ministry attention for a long time to come ... We value your prayers as we seek to work out what this will mean in practice.
Don Brewin

Catching up on Southern Nyanza with Revd Tom Hewson,

The 2006 Soma Team to the Diocese of South Nyanza was the most exciting SOMA team I have served on. It was awesome to watch God's sovereign Holy Spirit day by day take the Diocesan Conference where He wanted. Both the Team and the 120 participants were all caught up in the goodness of what was God was doing.



Mr Samson Bwambale, Revd Marie Jackson, Rt Revd James Ochiel, Mr Leigh Cummings, Mrs Christine Ochiel, Revd Rosie Hewson, Revd Moses Bushendich, Revd Tom Hewson

The conference theme was 'Leadership and Revival, and we believe that we have left a strengthened foundation for the leadership of both the laity and clergy who attended, as well as having experienced an extraordinary time of spiritual refreshing that was for the SOMA team and conference attendees alike

Marie Jackson, one of the team shares thoughts of her first time in Africa:

"Before I left home, a friend told me to have fun and enjoy. I did have fun but I also experienced great joy - being used by the Almighty; seeing the Holy Spirit work on His timetable rather than ours and worshipping in a language I don't speak. It is a huge joy (and a huge privilege) to share communion 4 thousand miles from home and that I now have 2 Ugandan brothers in Christ who I shall never forget. It's joyous to see folks try their hand at prophecy for the first time. On the practical side, I rejoiced at the live chickens in the offertory, sharing food I had never tried before, and paddling through ankle-deep mud in the dark in the rain not knowing where I'm going and trusting that the stranger leading the way is taking me somewhere safe. I could have stayed at home with my knitting but I thank God that it happened and for giving me joy in my heart."

Optimism in Niassa

by Revd Dr Alison Morgan

Niassa is an enormous diocese. It covers half of Mozambique, and is 3 times the size of the UK. Starved of education and resources during the 17 years of war from which it emerged only 14 years ago, Mozambique is an extraordinary country of gentle people and, especially in this northern area, great poverty. The land mines have now been cleared (just a week before our arrival); but the legacy of violence still lurks below the surface.

In the church the war has resulted in a serious lack of theological education but the church is united under the leadership of Bishop Mark van Koevering, and growing fast. Mozambique remains the most unreached country in sub-Saharan Africa, but there is a great sense of optimism that with the right encouragement and resources that will soon change.



Two conferences

We ran two conferences in Lichinga and Milange, working with the 50 or so diocesan clergy and seminarians and introducing the "Rooted in Jesus" group discipleship course which they will use throughout this huge diocese - initially with the 400 or so catechists, then through them for confirmation classes and lay training. We included a lot of basic teaching on the Holy Spirit with opportunity for prayer and personal ministry, and ended with a session on the relationship between law and grace requested by Bishop Mark as this is a key issue in the diocese. Our offerings were well received, although at times there seemed to be serious spiritual hindrance.

"God of Heaven will give us success" say Nuba Women.

Revd Sonja Arnold reports on the ground breaking conference held in the diocese of Kadugli/Nuba Mountains, Sudan in April



Nuba women walking to church

"Who will look after my blind husband?"

"Who will fetch water for the children?"

"Will we understand these foreigners?"

Recognising the key role that women will play in the rebuilding of church and nation after years of civil war, Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail and his wife Jaleela organised the first all-female SOMA conference in Sudan. It was clear that of the 40 plus delegates many had sacrificed a great deal to get there, with some even walking 24 hours over the mountains to reach us. Kadugli is the main town in the Nuba Mountains but was previously inaccessible to the outside world. The peace agreement means that the Bishop is now able to take up residence there and minister to both the North and Southern regions of his Diocese.

Flexibility and Fun

Being prepared to be flexible was the key to success of this conference where everything had to be translated. The team (Revs Amanda Johnson and Sonja Arnold (UK) and from Uganda, Canon Hellen Oneka and Mrs Margaret Kiswiriri, a nurse) had great fun working out dramas to aid the teaching which made the women laugh and quickly warm to us. Using the different expertise on the team we taught on a variety of subjects; Foundational teaching on creation, fall, redemption and the work of the Spirit, then key practical topics such as family life, health issues, HIV/AIDS, involving children and young people in church life and one very powerful and moving day as people grappled with the issue of forgiveness and reconciliation.

It wasn't all work though, we sang, we danced and laughed and laughed as we taught silly party games. It was a joy that God wanted his children who had suffered so much to play, to enjoy themselves and each other and to celebrate his goodness. Indeed it was Nehemiah, who said "The joy of the Lord is your strength".

Commitment

Over the week 8 women made commitments for Christ and many were filled with the Spirit. Most of the encouraging were the many testimonies where women spoke of how they felt God was calling them to step out of fear, to move into leadership, to teach others and that he was giving them a new confidence and vision. One woman who lived locally told of how she had already been back to her village and found herself preaching and telling others of all that she had learnt.

At the end of the conference, having listened to teaching on Nehemiah all week, the delegates summed up the conference with these words taken from Neh 2:20 "The God of heaven will give us success. We, his servants will start rebuilding."

Optimism in Niassa cont ...

Witchcraft and murder

Witchcraft, murder and alcoholism were among the issues being grappled with by some of those present and in the second conference particularly there was a strong sense of hesitancy which with the help of intercessory support at home gradually lifted as people grew in confidence and began to receive from the Lord in the ministry times.

We have said that we are willing to return to provide further training and encouragement if that would be helpful. Meanwhile they need our prayers, for the task before them is huge.

"A historic week in the life of the church here" (Jan van Stelten, our translator)

"COME AWAY WITH ME "
hosted by SOMA UK and Resource
21st - 23rd Jun, Swanwick

This Prayer Gathering with Ruth Fazal and her team, will have taken place by the time you receive this issue of SHARING. There will be a report in our next edition.

Teams for the rest of 2006:

Sept::

Uganda - Bukedi, led by Revd Richard Salmon, lots of prayers needed as this is the first SOMA mission to this diocese.

Oct::

Tanzania - Ruaha, led by Revd Kevin Roberts and a team from his church in Meole Brace. The Archbishop of Tanzania, Most Revd Donald Mtetemela is also the bishop of Ruaha. A SOMA team last went there in 1997. There has been much famine in the area

DRC Congo - Nord-Kivu, led by Revd Simon Brignall to assist with Synod, the first visit by SOMA after years of civil war

Nov:

Sudan - Iainya, led by Revd Andrew Wheeler and a team from Guildford, together with CMS

Different types of team

One area that we are constantly revisiting is how do we keep a balance between maintaining our "core business" (sending teams to encourage the work of the Holy Spirit in different dioceses where we are invited), and pioneering teams - moving into new areas; focussing on new aspects of Christian teaching (such as Community Transformation, or Living as a Prophetic Community) or developing youth projects such as Soul Nairobi.

SOMA Friends

Several people with links to SOMA are seriously unwell at the moment, and need our urgent prayers. Please contact the SOMA Office if you want to know more.

Headlines ...

From the Trustees and UK Council

Report and Accounts for 2005

The final deficit at the end of 2005 was around £4,000 - less than we expected. Thank you for your support!

Financial Projection for this year

As a result of some generous donations, we hope to end 2006 with a small profit - an important legacy for Don's successor.

Searching for just one person - but it has to be the right one. A short list of applicants for the post of National Director will be interviewed on 4th July - please pray that the right person will be found.

Strategy The exciting ideas that have come from the Strategy Working Party need to be put into action - some now, some soon, and others later. Which of the busy people involved with SOMA should be responsible?

Jonathan Burton went to Tanzania last year and he has just sent an update since that mission:

"I am currently working on an IT contract for "Save The Children". This ends in September, and on September 24th, I shall leave IT work completely and become full-time pastor of a growing local evangelical church.

This is a really exciting new chapter in my life. This move makes sense of all that God has been doing in my life in recent years, particularly in the last 12 months, and particularly during the SOMA mission in Tanzania. I really praise the Lord for how wonderfully he has worked. God's guidance has been so specific and clear over the last 6 months that it really was very clear that I had to go this way.

I just wanted to say thanks. The SOMA mission was definitely a major turning point for me, both in terms of my own spiritual walk and also in considering my future direction. It started a period of 6 months of searching which led to me accepting the call to the ministry. This call is something that others have been encouraging me to do for years, but which I have been resisting. Full submission to God was a big lesson for me on the mission (although I'm sure it is one I shall have to keep on learning!)

I am quite amazed when I sit back and look at the last 12 months and see just how far God has brought me, and how much he has turned me around".

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Making SOMA visible We have a unique "product", a distinctive style, and a story to tell! But we need more people who share our excitement about the story, and are willing to speak about SOMA (supported by relevant materials).

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SOMA Intercessors

We are always keen to hear from people who feel called to pray regularly for the work of SOMA, Please contact Hilary Steynor on 01483 301013 for more details..

*SOMA ON-LINE GIVING *

SOMA UK has teamed up with Just Giving to create a secure on-line donations facility. This facility can be accessed via <http://www.justgiving.com/somauk/donate>, and it accepts one-off or monthly credit or debit card donations.

SOMA relies almost entirely on the sacrificial giving of our donors to keep going. Please help us to continue our vision of bringing the renewing work of the Holy Spirit to the Anglican Communion.

*SITUATIONS VACANT *

It is likely that SOMA International will be looking for a part-time Conference Administrator, based in UK, to work from home from around 1st October 2006 until August 2008. Further details from Don.

Also:

ReSource(our sister mission agency), will be looking for a new administrator from the end of August. For further details, contact Martin Cavender, UK Director on 01235 553722

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