

SHARING

(SOMA logo)

The Newsletter of SOMA UK

Spring 2006

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."

Who needs SOMA?

*Don Brewin
shares his
ongoing
passion*

Why is it that when I wake up on a Monday morning I am still passionate about SOMA? Why is it that in spite of the anxiety - over finance, the workload, the increasing demands of the ministry, and the inadequacies of what we do - I still believe that God has a place for SOMA: this fragile, pilgrim organisation based in a stable in a small village in the English countryside? Why is it that as I think of the future, of handing over the reins of SOMA UK to someone else, I believe that SOMA is needed even more than ever? As I think back over the past 11 years, here are some of the key memories which, by the grace of God, keep me going - and wanting to go on going on!



New Anglican Church plant just outside Freetown

Individuals:

- * The small boy standing by his house in Uganda, waving as the car passed him; and the Lord saying to me, "How is what you are doing affecting that child?"
- * The privilege of standing in a lake in rural India, baptising new converts, including a girl who had been raised from the dead
- * Kneeling in a cathedral with a Bishop while he weeps his eyes out for his people
- * Seeing the faces of some Sudanese women in a war zone, who realised for the first time that God had not abandoned them

Congregations, churches, dioceses:

- * Seeing a Diocese move from suspicion of the Holy Spirit, to the present time when the healing ministry is diocesan policy for every parish
- * Watching and praying while Indian pastors knelt in threes and wept on each others shoulders as they prayed for one another
- * Weeping with Rwandese at the trauma and devastation of their land during and after the genocide, and at the failure of that highly evangelised Christian community to prevent it

And on the community or wider level:

- * Seeing people's eyes light up when they understand some of the reasons why the Gospel has, or has not, flourished in their area
- * Sharing with Southern Sudanese the experience of being bombed, and working through crucial issues of forgiveness
- * Challenging a downtrodden Indian diocese to stop making jokes about itself
- * Encouraging beleaguered Christians in the land of Christ's birth
- * Enabling the pastors of a Sudanese Diocese the size of Austria, to meet and to explore how the Church there can help build a new nation

What is happening now?

SOMA UK is now just one member in a growing international family, whose "shape" reflects the multi-directional nature of Christian mission:

- ** Our new International Chairman, Bishop Ben Kwashi, comes from Nigeria **

- * The newest members of the family are from traditionally "receiving" nations, who are now becoming "senders"
- * The churches which birthed the older members need rejuvenating

The Anglican Communion

In our role as "a gift to the Anglican Communion", SOMA has developed a network of personal friendships with Anglican leaders all over the world. This has created a respect for SOMA which gives us no official position, but a lot of "voice"! The support Bishops and others give for the pre-Lambeth Conferences which SOMA has organised (and again, we hope, in 2008) is a mark of this unique, non-threatening role.

In the present fragmentation that is taking place in the Communion, SOMA has come under pressure to take sides: but in spite of our personal convictions, I believe we should seek - as long as we are able - to be bridge-builders, not bridge-breakers.

To the future:

SOMA continues to be asked for teaching about community transformation.

SOMA is alone in being willing to take teams into new areas way beyond most people's comfort-zones.

SOMA is engaging with an increasingly influential age-group - the young people of Africa - in holistic community projects such as "Soul Nairobi 2006".

SOMA is willing to stand in the gap, encouraging dialogue with those who think differently, and speaking prophetically to those in leadership positions.

concluded on page 4

Unexpected Answers

Derek Smith reflects on his third mission with SOMA - this time to Kajiado, Kenya with team members Naomi Harmsworth-Butler, Charles Sugden, Chris Cooke, Annie Wintour, and Titus Baraka from Uganda

Every SOMA team must find itself asking "Why are we here?" during a mission. Often it will be a different set of answers from the ones we gave before setting out. Some of the moments we knew God had brought us to Kajiado were unexpected.

Naomi spoke about a need for healing in places where we thought the hurt was gone. Her talk on abandonment by a human father was electrifying in its effect. A wonderful testimony emerged over the next days as a woman was released to forgive her father and went on to experience a deep reconciliation with him over events decades earlier.

Abandoned

This was a great team. Only once did I feel abandoned by them. We visited a remote community struggling with poverty and drought. One of our hosts announced that the team would now pray for rain. Help! Time to delegate, I thought, only to discover every team member with eyes tightly shut and heads down earnestly avoiding the nod to pray. Our heavenly Father did not abandon us. Within minutes there was a tropical downpour which gave great cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

Chris had served on five teams in Africa without ever seeing wild animals. Our Lord wants us to know He cares for His children. Our journey to church on Sunday brought us close to zebra, gazelles, a monkey and several giraffes. Charles' flute was an unfamiliar instrument to the Masai, who found this "pipe" something of a curiosity.

Power of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit fell on the Church leaders as they received a ministry of prophetic music in a powerfully silent response. Titus was invaluable as an African team member without a local tribal identity. Time and again he interpreted signs for us, and put his finger on where the spiritual conflict was experienced. Annie was no stranger to Kenya. An impromptu choir gathered to give her and the team a memorable send off. The guest house was bemused but accepting of a concert over supper in the dining room.

The Lord was faithful in giving showers. Both the team and Kajiado diocese long to see the drenching rain of the Spirit.



Praying at the Water Pump , Kajiado, Kenya

Invisible Chains

Don goes west to Freetown

A team - SOMA UK and SOMA Nigeria came together for this mission. Five team members came from UK; Revds Don Brewin, Simon Holloway, Steve Cleary, Edmund Cargill Thompson and Mrs Marilyn Christian-Edwards. Simon and Steve were experienced Sierra Leone hands! Revd Celestine and Mrs Laura Aniamaka came from Nigeria, together with John Uka, (He stepped in to replace the SOMA Nigeria National Director, Bishop Tunde Adeleye, who had to withdraw to attend to urgent matters in his Diocese).

This was not exactly the first SOMA Mission to Sierra Leone - a SOMA Ireland went there in 1991 - but so much has changed in the country since the civil war, that it might well have been. Although most of our time was spent in the capital city of Freetown, it was clear that the whole country was still suffering from the trauma of that conflict. The physical battles had ceased; but the emotional and spiritual ones were very much in evidence .

March of Witness

On the opening day of the Conference, we took part in a March of Witness through the city centre, from Victoria Park to the Cathedral. The clergy, Mothers Union, and a large number of pupils at church secondary schools were accompanied by a brass band! People could not avoid watching - some at the windows of their shops or offices; others on the street. Yet most of their eyes were "dead" - without expression - they were unmoved by the procession, and seemed bound by their past memories, with little expectation that things might improve in the future.

Burning the regalia

We were taken aback when during the first evening "Revival". A lay member of the conference came forward and testified that he had recently left a Masonic Lodge of which he had been a member for many years. He wanted publicly to burn his Masonic regalia. We had heard that many clergy in the Diocese were involved in Freemasonry, but this was the first mention of the topic in the Conference - and it had not come from us! This "invisible chain" was mentioned several times during the week - and it was clear that many were affected by it. For example, next door to our accommodation in the YMCA, there was a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts, run by a Pentecostal pastor. Many inmates had chains on their feet - these were symbols of the invisible chains of addiction that bound them.

Dancing Eyes

Perhaps it was a subconscious reaction to the "dead eyes" - but "dancing eyes", as a sign of the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit, became the watchword for the Conference. Many were blessed, and received a new sense of hope for the future. The lively music - brought into the Cathedral for the first time by an ad hoc group from different churches - enabled the congregation to express their delight in the presence of the Lord, in a way that almost made "the stones cry out"! There is a long way to go, but we sensed that through this visit the Lord has started a process of transformation which we pray will continue, through the efforts of a gradually increasing number of clergy and lay leaders who themselves have begun to experience the reality of "dancing eyes".

For the full diary of the mission, please visit www.somauk.org or contact the office

Help and Healing in Orlu: 18th - 29th October 2005

The third SOMA visit to the diocese of Orlu, led by Revd Tim Atkins from Christ Church, North Finchley combined teaching on Christian discipleship - bible reading, witnessing, fellowship, confession and prayer; together with practical help to address many of the health issues experienced by people there. These include headaches, joint and kidney area pains, fever and high blood pressure. In many cases these were perceived as demonic; but the two doctors who were part of the team, Dr Stella Okonkwo and Dr Samera Putris, were able to treat many ailments with aid of plenty of clean drinking water.

Stella Okonkwo, who comes from Orlu but lives in London, was able to keep issues in context and help families see that many of the problems experienced by families and neighbours were in fact a result of feelings of buried anger and fear rather than demonic influence. Often demons were blamed instead of confronting challenges. It was only right to combine practical help with healing ministry.

Diocese of Kilimanjaro, Tanzania pushing forward in the power of the Holy Spirit: Revd Dr Allison Morgan

A team of from the UK were invited by Bishops John Hayden and Simon Makundi to visit DMK for 10 days in October to follow up on the "Rooted in Jesus" Christian growth course which has now been in use in the diocese since 2002. Our aim this time was to focus on the theme of the final stage of the course : Community Transformation.



Two years ago in Kiteto we had experienced an extraordinary day with 99 evangelists and pastors gathered together for teaching, prayer and praise, at the end of which people testified to being healed, released and filled by the Holy Spirit.

Kiteto is important

A prophecy had been given: that God knew their pain and their struggles, and he wanted to say that Kiteto - a place unimportant in the eyes of the world - is very important to him. If they would devote themselves to prayer as they had done that day, he would pour out his blessing on them. And here we were, 2 years later, looking at a place now changed out of all recognition. Workmen were putting the final touches to an enormous cathedral. Students bustled about the compound of a new Christian College. Group leaders shared their experiences; pastors talked of revival. And so we gathered, water lapping about our ankles to keep the new cement floor moist, windows of the cathedral not yet in, to pray and to learn. **We thanked God for what he has done in the lives of individuals, and for the renewal coming in the churches.**

And we began to pray that these blessings would flow out into the communities of this dry and forgotten part of one of the poorest countries in the world. It's a determination that has been maintained; 50 group leaders have continued to meet weekly for a half night of prayer, and the Lord is blessing his people.

Meeting with Masai

The final part of our mission was in Arusha, the centre of the diocese, where we found testimonies of great encouragement. One parish has 16 groups, 13 of them amongst the Masai. This time we'd taken Masai translations of the leader's material. The Masai, one explained, don't take to new things (we think we knew this!). But once something had been accepted, it couldn't be taken away again; and now that "Rooted in Jesus" was in Masai, all the people - meeting in age sets - would do it. There are now over 3000 people meeting in 230 groups in this single diocese. The constant voice is this: people here are learning, for the first time, what it is to live the Christian life, what it is to grow, to change, to pray, to watch God at work - and above all, what it is to do these things together. It's astonishing to see.

Our days were spent in 12 different deaneries, teaching and sharing. Every evening when we returned to the guest-house, we prayed with many people who came for healing. John Magumba from Uganda had wonderful insight into the local culture. The Diocese has since rewarded him by making him a honorary Canon. Revd Mike Cotterell had a special gift for praying with the young people. We constantly reminded the people with whom we share ministry that it was not white man's magic but the power of Christ. God worked wonders in 12 days!!

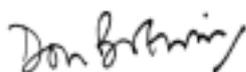
Revd Tim Atkins

STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS...

PRAY for the team of Revds Sonja Arnold and Amanda Johnson, with Revd Canon Hellen Oneka and Mrs Margaret Kiswiriri, leading a seminar to the women of the diocese of Nuba Mountains/Kadugli, Southern Sudan (13th - 28th March)

Who needs SOMA? continued from page one

SOMA has developed enough confidence in the Lord to encourage people to move out from their safe containers into a place of maturity, of unpredictable, risky involvement with the mess of real life - "The Second Half of Renewal". May the Lord the Spirit continue to give all of us that excitement as we wake up on the Monday mornings of the future...



Strengths and Strategies

- a message from John Watson

What a challenge to take on the chair of the SOMA UK trustees in 2006! Not only because Richard Hay has been such an able chairman but because we are faced with the task of recruiting a **successor to Don Brewin**, who has contributed so extensively to the vision, prophetic ministry and outworking of SOMA over the years as UK National Director. I ask myself what are the priorities for the future?

* We need to **build on the strengths** of SOMA UK, such as its visibility and ministry in those dioceses and countries where it has been engaged in short term mission and the respect with which it is held, through Don and through the goodwill built up by SOMA team visits over the years.

* We need to be ready to **change our strategy**. A future SOMA UK will need to modify its approach, as it seeks to address the issue of its low visibility in the UK, to strengthen its connections with other agents and partners, and to add value to the activities of the many who now work with Anglican churches overseas.

* We need to be ready to **adjust our structures**. There is a growing awareness of and willingness to examine the roles and relationships of trustees, council, director, staff and teams and we need to be ready to listen even more intently to each other and to adopt new ways of working.

"COME AWAY WITH ME"

21st - 23rd June 2006,
Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

The brochures have been out for less than a month - and there are already over 50 applications! That means the event is one-third full ... As the world seems to be spinning faster and faster out of human control, the need to "Come Away with [Him]" gets ever more imperative. If you haven't yet signed up, do so soon. Brochures from the SOMA Office if you haven't already got one.

Strengths and strategies cont ...

The Strategic Working Party (SWP) has given us a helpful start with its recommendations and the recent **Team Leaders Consultation** has made an important contribution.

We have started the process of searching for a successor to Don at our recent meeting on 6th February and, ideally would like to be in a position to make an offer to a preferred candidate in the summer of this year. We would greatly value your prayers for guidance in articulating the job of ND of SOMA UK; for the ability to choose and implement supporting processes; and for wisdom and discernment in the short-listing and selection of God's candidate for the future.

May I take this opportunity to **thank all of you** who engage with the work of SOMA UK? If you have had the experience of a SOMA team visit, I would like you to know that God has blessed us as we have heard of your welcome and your infectious joy. If you have been on a visiting team, thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment. If you are an intercessor, your prayers continue to be the backbone of our work, if you are a member of the "home team" or contribute in other ways, a big "Thank You" for your faithfulness and your ongoing work for SOMA.

Teams in 2006 are planned for Malawi, Southern Nyanza in Kenya; North Kigezi in Uganda and Bukedi, Uganda - all church led teams. Please be patient if you are still waiting to go on a team. Dates, themes and whether a team is from a single church or formed are all factors we have to balance and sometimes it takes a while to happen.

Soul Nairobi

At present we have nearly 30 UK team members, planning to join 50 from Uganda, and 4920 others for this ground-breaking event in August. Each day will involve worship and teaching, local community service, and outreach - in 5 different zones of the city. Nothing like it has ever happened before! Revd Steve Maina, Chair of the organising group in Nairobi, is coming to UK for the training weekend for UK team members at the Wycliffe Centre. Further details from the SOMA Office. Also check out the website- www.soulnairobi.com

News on finance

We are pleased to report that much work has been done on streamlining the accounting systems and updating software to incorporate the SOMA UK database. This will lead to much greater efficiency in communications with our supporters. The project is a challenge but Danielle, with advice from Andrew Cooke the new Treasurer has made excellent progress and the new system should soon be up and running.

What happens when 24 SOMA team leaders meet for 24 hours?

This was the liveliest of the Consultations we have held every two years - probably because the 24 or so who attended were engaged in real discussions about what concerned them: how SOMA should be organised in the future; what sort of National Director do we need; and how SOMA teams should be organised. Robin Green produced a comprehensive report, which included a long list of suggestions for the Trustees to think about!

**SOMA UK,
PO Box 6002,
Heath and Reach,
Leighton Buzzard,
Beds. UK
LU7 0ZA**

Tel (+44) (0) 1525 237953
Fax (+44) (0) 1525 237954
E-mail: info@SOMAUK.org
Website: www.somauk.org
UK Registered Charity No 279759