

SHARING

The Newsletter of SOMA UK

SOMA
SHARING OF
MINISTRIES ABROAD

AUTUMN 2007

"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."



Some fell on good soil...

The parable of the sower remains one of the better known of Jesus' stories. At first hearing it's seemingly straightforward enough – even to our mostly post-rural ears. Different conditions of ground produce, or fail to produce, a harvest. But the disciples, as the gospel writers record, clearly required an explanation. Yet the parable of the sower was intended, as were all Jesus stories, not only to answer immediate questions but also to provoke further thought – and as ever, with Jesus, to point beyond the familiar, the at first thought seemingly obvious and temporal to the deeper, eternal truths of the Kingdom beyond.

Like the disciples we are not handed the answers on a plate, but rather invited, more discomforted really, to seek out, to look deeper, to persevere till we find for ourselves the bigger answers that Jesus is pointing us towards.

The seed is scattered, all the ground receives seed: that is, the hearers each receive the word – it's what they do with it, how they react to it in their heart that is a central concern of the parable.

You know the story: scattered seed, the good news, is thwarted in its intent to bear a fruitful crop, by being severally eaten, scorched and choked. It provokes questions: What is the state of my heart? What is its condition? Is my heart good soil? What if my heart is not, but hardened, shallow, or choked with sin? Further than that, the underlying question provoked is this: who then can change the heart?

This question draws Jesus' hearers towards the messianic promise made by the Father and revealed through prophets Jeremiah, Joel and Ezekiel of the giving of the Holy Spirit, the new covenant promise of a new heart. A heart made receptively fertile by the Holy Spirit...

In Tanzania recently we were in the southern part of Kiteto at the cathedral in Kibaya, set on the dry Masai Steppe. Here, four years ago, in response to a request from the Diocese for a small groups' course to disciple



church members, Alison Morgan constructed, and with a SOMA team introduced, 'Rooted in Jesus'.

Four years later our team returned to consult with the existing group leaders as they completed the four book course, to train and encourage the newly appointed group leaders as they prepared to plant new groups and to celebrate their achievements, the first Diocese to complete the course. Over 330 existing and new group leaders attended in all.

The overwhelming fruit of the process, especially pronounced among the more rural deaneries, has been a new confidence, joy and empowering through the experience of the groups' encounters with the Word and Spirit during the groups, along with a resulting harvest of new ministries, deepened faith, healings, care, release and reconciliation, changed lives, and, particularly pleasingly, a flowering of commitment to a new wave of evangelism and mission. Rooted in Jesus (or 'SOMA Groups' as they are known there) have very clearly been the right thing at the right time. The Spirit created receptive hearts that have received the word and many are being disciplined and producing a harvest of one hundred, sixty and thirty fold.

Stephen Dinsmore, National Director.

SOMA Finance Administrator

Meet **Steve Fincher** our new Finance Administrator. Steve took over the role at the beginning of September when the SOMA office moved to Somerset. He has an established interest in and experience of missions abroad and looks forward to his first SOMA team. Previously Steve worked in the aerospace industry as a project manager – with Westlands and with his own company.

Steve worships at The Mill Church where he is part of the finance team, is married to Mary has two adult children. When he's not keeping our SOMA finances in order Steve enjoys his grand-daughter Holly, walking and golf.



Doing A New Thing in DR Congo

Simon Brignall reports on the meeting he attended on behalf of SOMA between the Church of Congo and Overseas Partners held in Bunia, DR Congo, 19 -21 April 2007.

After 20 years of civil war and isolation the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo are at last able to re-engage with the world.

During this long trial it is the churches that have kept alight the hope of peace and reconciliation despite the ethnic and cultural traumas that have split apart the fabric of their nation's life.

They have been able to do this out of their own meagre financial resources because of the commitment of pastors, evangelists, administrators, doctors, nurses, teachers and many others willing to give their time and talents freely.

Despite the terrible war that has ravaged the country, churches, schools, clinics and hospitals have remained open and provided essential services to the suffering people of DR Congo.

Such work has gone largely unsung and untold in the world's media, but it must be recognized that it is only because of this heroic effort that there are still churches, schools and hospitals that are still functioning, despite being understaffed, under-funded and ill equipped.

The meeting of Overseas Partners, (that is Aid and Mission Agencies), with the Anglican Church of Congo in Bunia on the Eastern border of DR Congo, was able to celebrate and give thanks for the achievements of the church. We found a church in good heart, full of energy and vision, engaging in church planting as well as compassionate caring.

However it was obvious from the start of the meeting that the church was overwhelmed by the demands made on it. Without any help from central government, the churches have taken on the role of chief provider of social, medical and educational provision in the country.

It was, then, maybe inevitable that demands for financial help dominated the first day of our meeting. How could the churches continue to bear this huge responsibility without a large injection of cash from the Aid Agencies?

The tone of the meeting, from my perspective, at this point, almost deteriorated into a bidding war by the Dioceses for financial help.

Financial help, of course, is available, but to many of us there at the meeting it was disturbing to see this rise to the top of the agenda. We asked 'what was the vision of the Church?' Where did the schools, hospitals and clinics fit into their vision of a renewed and reconciled country?

It was really good to have with us the gifted and Spirit-led conference facilitator, Bill Crooks. Bill is also a gifted artist, and drew for us a picture of a small, thatched roofed church building, dwarfed by smart new schools and hospitals. The lesson was not lost! Did we want to build a living church or a social services department?

It was at this point that the mood of the meeting changed, as we realised that we had got our priorities wrong!

From money we moved into mission. 'What is the mission of the church?' we asked, and from that discussion emerged a new picture - a picture of a body in action, moving forward, with arms and feet spread wide as it positively engaged with a needy country. A church motivated not by a need for money, but by a desire to see God's Kingdom come on earth.

It was so encouraging to hear the feedback now coming from the groups of Bishops and clergy.

"We want a church with a solid base in the word of God;
A church ready to give rather than just receive;
A church spiritually renewed;
A church that transforms society by its testimony to the love of Christ;
A united church, reconciled, and reaching out to others;
A spiritually mature church, moving from milk to meat;
A church with educated and enlightened leaders with courage to speak out against injustices;
A church providing hope to the people through practical action."

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.

These were just a few of the suggestions from the groups, and as they came together we all rejoiced to see the birth of a new vision for the Anglican Church in the DR Congo.

This was a vision that all were able to sign up for: the Church, the Mission Agencies and Aid Agencies pledged to build this church in the years to come.

For me, this Bunia meeting was a revelation...

From despair to hope, in three days!

From money to mission.

From a mentality of poverty to one of generosity.

From 'what do we need' to 'what can we give?'

Soma UK is proud and deeply encouraged to be in partnership with a church inspired by such a vision!

Simon Brignall

Check Your Cheque!

There have been many changes at SOMA during the transition of the last few months. Among them has been a change of post office box address and a consequent need for mail forwarding. Some initial difficulties were encountered; one letter took two and a half months to get back to us!

So, if in the last four months you have made a donation by cheque to SOMA we would be very pleased if you would check your bank statement to ensure that SOMA has banked it.



SOMA TEAMS in 2008

Successful SOMA team visits are dependent on many different factors. Often arrangements are only fully in place right at the last minute. Among the teams for 2008 the following are likely to be arranged.

- Stephen will be leading a Youth conference in Sudan in March. For the Diocese Rumbek, Wau, Yirol and Cueibets. This is a conference that will need additional funding from SOMA. This is linked with the Diocese of Salisbury's Sudan group.

- South Rwenzori Uganda, probably in May, teaching the discipleship course 'Rooted in Jesus';

- East Zambia in June, with team leader Alison Morgan;

- South Malawi in August, a team lead by John McGinley;

There is a great opportunity to work with some of our SOMA international partners in September across the province of Southern Africa. The Growing the Church initiative starts with a combined training conference in Jo'burg and is then followed by the teams travelling to Dioceses throughout the Province.

Contact the SOMA office if you are interested in being considered for any of these teams.

Soul Bugolobi – making a difference

When SOMA linked up with Church Army Africa for Soul Nairobi in August 2006, we brought a coach-load of team members from Uganda, not least in the hope that they would catch the vision for a similar project in Kampala. This is what happened! For this mission we focussed attention on a limited area – Bugolobi, a suburb with an interesting history, to the east of Kampala – rather than spread more widely in the city. This meant that the teams had less distance to travel each day, which cut down on the time and the cost. It also meant that the impact of the project was more concentrated.

THE TEAM: The core team for this mission came from the congregation of the Church of the Resurrection (Church of Uganda), under the inspirational leadership of the Vicar, Revd John Awodi, with Joshua Kakaire, Moses Wamono and others. They had been working on this project for a year before it happened. They had sought to involve other local churches in the project, and had received positive gestures of support. However, although some individual team members came from other local churches, some gestures remained just that – and “CofR” rose to the challenge to carry the burden – administration, finance and intercession. They were joined for the mission itself by an enthusiastic team: 27 young people from Kenya, seven from Juba (Sudan), four from Arua in Northern Uganda, and seven from UK. Some of these team members had taken part in Soul Nairobi in 2006, but the majority were new – to SOMA, and certainly to this type of mission!

FIVE AREAS: The team was divided into three groups, and during the week of mission focussed their attention on 5 different areas of Bugolobi. Each morning, dressed in colourful T-shirts, they cleaned the streets, under the fascinated gaze of local shopkeepers, market-traders and residents, as well as the children who were not at school. On more than one occasion the team was joined by some of the local characters, at the beginning somewhat worse for wear, who saw joining in as a passport to a free lunch!

“WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?”: During the afternoons, the team went back to the areas where they had worked in the morning, to visit homes, shops, and chat to those standing around. The silent witness of the morning’s work raised the question “Why are you doing this?” – which led to some remarkable opportunities for team members to witness for Jesus Christ. People were then invited to an open-air rally, which (with outside speakers, and a powerful drama about the effect of AIDS on a family) took place in three centres each day.

LOCAL SCHOOLS: In addition, a small team went out each day to local schools – giving a fascinating insight into the varied state of education in Uganda, with large numbers of private enterprise schools setting up in response to the demand for better quality primary education than the free state schools were offering.

KAMPALA CITY: The timing of this project coincided with a frenetic period throughout Kampala of preparation for “CHOGM” (“Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting”) which is to take place in Uganda in November. A huge amount of building is taking place, roads are being repaired, and the city cleaned! So the idea of tidying rubbish, and keeping the community clean, fitted in with what was being publicised through the city, and has been widely canvassed by church leaders.

“BINS FOR BUGOLOBI”: One idea, which came from Moses Wamano, was that a rubbish bin would be given to each school and community centre in Bugolobi, to be regularly emptied by Kampala City Council. This would encourage people to dispose of their (non-recyclable) rubbish in a proper way (John Awodi was encouraging people also to use organic rubbish on their gardens). About 30 bins were sponsored by donors from UK. They were delayed in manufacture in Kampala, but arrived (and distributed) the day the teams were to leave!

EFFECTS: Whenever I lead a SOMA team, the question hovers at the back of my mind “Will it make a difference?” My model of understanding short term missions is that of a catalyst – which, dropped into the mix for a short time, helps to speed up a reaction which is already under way. If there is nothing happening beforehand, a short term team will make little difference – but where there is an ongoing work of God, the team give encouragement and motivation. In addition, the team members themselves always benefit.

In the words of one of this year’s team: “To be honest, I didn’t know what to expect – but I had a desire to come back from mission a transformed person ... my experience with SOMA did just that!”



TRANSFORMED?: The theme our hosts in Bugolobi took for the mission was “Making a Difference in the heart of Bugolobi” – not just on the edges! Did it do so? It is too early to know (and sometimes only the Lord knows). Bugolobi is hard ground; the transformation we long for is nowhere near complete. But we pray that Soul Bugolobi will have helped the process move slightly further down the long path to fulfilment.

FUTURE “SOULS”?: Team members were talking about Arua, Juba (Southern Sudan) and elsewhere. While I am encouraged that the concept is gaining strength – these events require a huge amount of planning, intercession and finance. So it is vital only to try to put on a similar event in a place clearly indicated by the Lord!

Don Brewin



Giving to SOMA

SOMA is completely funded by the generosity of you, our supporters. An easy, quick and very cost efficient way to give to SOMA, at the click of a mouse, is through **justgiving**.

Try it for yourself. It’s really easy...

- Go to the **justgiving.com** website.
- At the ‘find a charity section’ on the homepage put ‘SOMA UK’ into the search box and click ‘GO’.
- Scroll down the page, when the SOMA UK box appears click on ‘select’.
- In the ‘make a donation’ box click on ‘donate’ and then follow the instructions.
- You can make a single or a monthly donation of any amount by debit or credit card.

Use **justgiving** to make your donation and if you indicate you are a UK taxpayer they will reclaim the tax and transfer the enhanced amount directly into the SOMA bank account. Simple!

So do please consider make a donation through **justgiving**. It really is that easy!

Team to Kajiado

Team leader Annie Wintour writes.....

The opportunity to lead a SOMA team to Kenya filled me with joy and trepidation! A team-member on previous missions to Nigeria (Okigwe South 2003) and Kenya (Kajiado 2005) the thought of building a team, sharing the SOMA experience with friends and seeing how the Lord would use (and magnify!) our gifts was uplifting. Coping with pre-mission planning and the additional administrative load proved quite a struggle!

In the months before leaving communication with the host diocese was erratic, their annual budget had made no provision for the sharing of conference costs and, at home, our curate - known and loved by members of the UK team - was dying of cancer. With only weeks to go I asked the Lord one more time - 'Have I heard you correctly?'

Within days my prayer was answered! Ronnie Briggs (CMS, N. Ireland), a Kajiado resident for over 20 years, emerged as the vital link man between Bishop Jeremiah Taama and myself - direct contact at last! Words of Knowledge and Scriptures that brought reassurance, clarity & encouragement (Luke 9: 16 - Jesus took what was offered, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the hungry) came pouring in and - in keeping with the Lord's earlier promise - financial giving for this mission grew to exceed our wildest expectations! Yes, it was right to be going, the Lord's call was unequivocal, and He had a purpose for the team.

Members of the team were: Revd Ann Fielden, Revd John Darling, Revd Annie Wintour, Mrs Dot Hayward and Revd Graham Hoslett all from Melksham in Wiltshire and Canon Captain Titus Baraka from Mukono Cathedral in Uganda. All were known to me, the Melksham crowd knew each other well and three out of six had been on SOMA missions before. Only Graham was setting foot on African soil for the first time, and he acclimatised overnight! Skills for resolving conflict within the team were happily not required; by contrast, the ease with which this team worked together was a major strength for the mission.

Building on the Renewal for Life Conference in 2005 our theme for 2007 was Living as a Prophetic Community. Pastors and over 30 Evangelists, representatives from almost every parish in the Diocese, came together for a 5-day Conference at the ACK Centre. We witnessed great joy & encouragement as the group slowly came together - some had been travelling for days.

Revd. Obadiah Mushene (Mission Coordinator), Revd Daniel Sankete and Ronnie, Maggie & Naomi Briggs (CMS) came to greet our arrival. Ronnie's team had built the centre and his words brought great encouragement to us:

"As we prepared to build we knelt in the long grass, asking the Lord to make this a place of study & learning for the whole Diocese. Your SOMA team coming here is like a fulfilment of that vision!"

An exchange of greetings opened the Conference, shortly followed by the Bishop's commissioning of our team. Meeting for prayer and bible study every morning and evening, there followed five wonderful days of worship learning and teaching together.



Praying that the Spirit would lead us, we found ourselves drawn into new areas of ministry - 'walking on water' in a dry & thirsty land!

All kinds of issues emerged: the need to appoint suitable translators for those who spoke no English; learning how to worship God in stillness and peace as well as in exuberant & energetic praise.

Then, the question of how a young Maasai Evangelist might proclaim Christ when he was unable to read? Pedro's testimony reminded us all of God's goodness and grace:

Unable to read and hungry for God's Word, Pedro cried out to the Lord for the gift to interpret scripture. God answered him, wonderfully; Pedro now reads and understands the Bible and shares what he has learned with his community - but he can read nothing else, only the Word of God!

Afternoon workshops faced more personal hurdles when discussing issues such as marriage and family life within a culture where polygamy is the norm and where Christians live alongside a growing Muslim community. Elder members of these groups shared how they had broken away from the prevailing Maasai culture, for the sake of the Gospel. The words of a 'wazee' (elder) were always listened to.

A workshop on 'Stewards of God's Creation' raised the concern that Pastors and Evangelists pay little attention to their own welfare, spend weeks away from their families and seldom take any time off - and our teaching on 'Sabbath rest' seemed to fall on deaf ears.

Of greater concern for the whole Church was the way 'the immediate' interrupted the 'long-term': the unexpected visitor at the start of the conference or the mobile phone that rings in the middle of Holy Communion being minor examples of a much deeper problem.

Ministering in pairs, we were invited to preach in three different churches each Sunday. Miles off the beaten track we were welcomed by local Maasai communities and refreshed with charcoal-flavoured 'chai'.

Saddened to discover issues of 'sheep-stealing' and church 'splits', even in these far off communities, we were truly humbled

by their generous hospitality to us - chapatis, stew & fresh vegetables bubbling over an open fire.

Singing and dancing before the Lord we witnessed a people whose longing for God was deep and uninhibited. Feet moving, hands clapping and ear-rings jangling! There is nothing half-hearted about African worship! Babies, strapped to their mothers' backs, were securely held, as were we all in the Father's love.



SOMA UK

PO Box 69
Merriott, Somerset
TA18 9AP

Tel: 01460 279737

E-mail: info@somauk.org

Website: www.somauk.org

UK Registered Charity No. 279759