

YES I'd like to support SOMA

Come on a Team

We are constantly looking for new team members to bring fresh impetus to our teams. Team members finance their own travel and costs, trips last between 10 and 20 days. Teams are always exciting, challenging, faith building and life changing!

Give Financially

We are always in need of financial support for SOMA's missions and ministry abroad. Your financial gifts further this strategic work of the Holy Spirit and make a real and lasting difference to people and communities abroad.

Pray

Prayer and Intercession are the solid foundation of SOMA's ministry. Partner with SOMA in prayer and intercession in this unique and invaluable ministry.

Invite

SOMA carefully and prayerfully considers all invitations for teams to minister and responds positively whenever we can.

Please detach and return to Stephen Dinsmore, SOMA UK, PO Box 69, Merriott, TA18 9AP, UK. Thank you.

My response

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

 POSTCODE _____
 EMAIL _____
 PHONE _____

Please...

- tell me about becoming part of a SOMA Team
- tell me about becoming a SOMA Intercessor
- tell me how to financially support SOMA's ministry
- send me details of giving to SOMA by bank standing order
- send me SOMA's free regular SHARING newsletter and Prayer Diary
- contact me as I would like to invite a SOMA team to my Diocese
- tell me more about my church becoming a SOMA Parish Mission Partner

The difference a year makes

For SOMA Team member Janet Darg-Forsyth, the mission in Maridi RS Sudan was the third time she had visited the country. She reports on the changes she found there.



Above: Prayer under the mango tree, Maridi.

What do a priest, a doctor, and a mother of six have in common? We were all called to form a SOMA team to Maridi and, as God's faithful (sometimes) servants, we took up the challenge to leave our homes and families and venture into nearly unknown territory.

I say "nearly", because it was my third mission with SOMA to South Sudan. I knew some of the people we'd be with, and had stayed in Maridi a year earlier. Patrick (the priest) and Nigel (the doctor and also a priest) are good friends and colleagues and had been on other SOMA missions elsewhere in Africa. I had met neither before our planning meeting on a cold January evening.

Our mission was to lead a week's conference for clergy and church leaders from Maridi, Ibba, and the surrounding area under the theme of Building God's New Community. This part of South Sudan has experienced years of war and suffered the trauma that accompanies a lifetime of conflict. I was very encouraged to notice this visit that there is now more hope for a stable future but there is still a need for continued healing and for the displaced to feel able to return to their homeland.

Being on a SOMA team enables you to experience new things and meet people from another culture. Some of these sights and experiences may be difficult, such as seeing the physical and emotional scars of war, and there are occasions when you can feel the intercessors back home upholding you in their prayers.

You may have to do things you wouldn't think possible, such as lead a teaching session on the Holy Spirit, facilitate a discussion group, or pray with a bishop – tasks that, between you and me, send me into a complete panic, but I am reminded that, with God, all things are possible.

I marvel at the transformation in the delegates during the week. At the beginning, there is heaviness, lethargy, a sense that life is understandably very difficult. As the sessions progress and healing prayer is offered, there is a noticeable change. They, and we, are reminded to put our trust in the Holy Spirit and allow God to guide our lives. The session on Forgiveness Is Healing was powerful, encouraging all to let go of past hurts, to seek and offer forgiveness. There is renewed enthusiasm and hope for the future.

As there was only a year between SOMA visits to this area (last year was to Ibba, a short drive away), I felt this strengthened the relationship between local delegates and the SOMA team, thereby enabling the conference to take shape sooner. We were also welcomed and invited to many places outside, including the local primary school, clinic, college, and to the funeral of a young man.

I give thanks to God for sending us to South Sudan and pray for the continual encouragement the people there gain from such visits.

Team members: Patrick Whitworth (leader), Janet Darg-Forsyth, Nigel Rawlinson, all from the UK

The heavens opened



Praying for Bishop Elijah

William Mather recounts how the SOMA team of six had a spectacular start and finish to the mission in Cueibet, South Sudan

The skies were torn asunder as the team stepped from the plane in Rumbek. The torrential thunderstorm made a dramatic impression on the mission joining the delegates meeting in a church with a tin roof and stone benches.

Cueibet is in survival mode and everything is very basic after 30 years of civil war. Bishop Elijah Matueny is deeply appreciative of help. He is very good at getting alongside people and is hugely respected. On the day we left he was going on to consecrate five new churches. He has a policy of changing and renewing from within and there are no fences. The Bishop and the team's prayers were that the conference would help bring significant vitality and empower the pastors and their churches.

The team's preparation had been conducted largely by email; it had proved impossible to meet beforehand due to geographical spread, but a very helpful Skype session enabled four of us to "meet" for an hour one evening.

South Sudan is recovering and rebuilding after so many years of oppression from the North. There is fierce pride in the new-found

independence and massive determination to make it work. Among the challenges are food and fuel shortages due to fighting on the north-south border, and those stemming from a largely agricultural economy and tradition with little experience of running businesses.

The raison d'être for the mission was to share the renewing work of the Holy Spirit through teaching based on the Renewal for Life SOMA resource, worship with the delegates, praying that these people would pass on the teaching and experience to others.

We were informed two days before leaving the UK that we would need tents. When we arrived, a washing-area for the team was constructed out of woven bamboo, cardboard and bits of polythene. Washing was in cold water using a bowl standing on the earth which got muddy when wet. Cooking was done by a team of local ladies over a charcoal or wood fire. On departure, two of the tents and equipment were left as a gift to the diocese. A further tent was given to Amos to take back to Rwanda.

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"My heart has been melted again and again"

Reflections from the Cueibet SOMA mission

"There's nothing like being out of your comfort zone to make you trust God more! Amazing time, great people, even greater Lord. Learned loads in more ways than one. Feel a real, I believe God given, love for the team, the country and all we met".
 Team member Mel Dowden, UK.

"How Christians take things for granted, thinking that everything is like what they know and see, forgetting other people's needs... and instead of giving thanks to the Lord, we allow our hearts to be filled with anxiety and murmuring. God have mercy on us! The Holy Spirit taught me that I am rich, and not only me but even my country comparing to other parts of the world. I feel deeply humbled. God has richly blessed my soul; my heart has been melted again and again".

Team member Rev Amos Semuzima, Rwanda.

"I have experienced a healing of the heart."
 Delegate Abraham.

"I didn't want to come and was very sceptical but then became very positive."
 Delegate James.

Team leader William reports: *"There were many expressions of thanks and gratitude, particularly after prayer ministry for being filled with the Holy Spirit. One delegate reported next day that he had had a dream in which he had reluctantly agreed to have an injection and his body was filled with a feeling of warmth and peace. He said he thought God was encouraging him to receive a real 'injection' of the Holy Spirit and not to resist further".*

Teaching on repentance, forgiveness and the healing of memories were particularly appreciated.

A hospital visit by two team members to see the sister of a delegate resulted in deliverance ministry. The woman had been thrashing on the floor and came to a new place of peace.

The heavens opened

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The Intercessors were an absolute lifeline. The mobile phone signals were, at best, intermittent. This made texting extremely difficult, but when texts arrived back from Hilary Steynor and the intercessors, there were often tears of gratitude. To know so many people were praying for us was unbelievable and made a huge difference to the sense of support and encouragement. Each team-member organised a personal prayer network with a coordinator to link with Hilary.

As the two weeks drew to a close, a "testimony time" was scheduled for the last session but this had to be abandoned due to torrential rain and a thunderstorm. In the same way the team arrived, so they concluded their mission, the torrential rain the sign and seal of God's blessing.

The team members were: Leader Rev William Mather, Rev Mike Archer, Mrs Melanie Dowden, Mrs Jane Hill, Mrs Helen Robinson (UK); Rev Amos Semuzima (Rwanda); Bishop Elijah Matuery.

Hope to the hope-less

Wau pastor Rev Andrew Apiny Macham reports on the SOMA mission to Wau, South Sudan in July as the new country celebrated its first year of independence. Two conferences were held, one in Wau and the other 60 miles south in Tonj, both in a diocese which saw some of the worst traumas of the war. This mission was in partnership with CMS's Dr Katie Rhoads. SOMA's five-day conference for clergy and church leaders at the Good Shepherd Cathedral in Wau took the theme of sharing the love of Christ and giving hope.

Many people are faced with a lot of challenges – some have health issues, while others are affected in ways that leave them discouraged, losing faith in God. SOMA ministries aim to restore hope and transform lives.

Bishop Moses Deng said: "Many people are hopeless and loiter around, there are many reasons which make them aimless in life, but the reality is that many people don't have Christ in their life. That is why they are wandering without going anywhere."

He stressed the importance of introducing the world to Christianity. He challenged the conference delegates: "If we fail to disciple the world, the world will disciple us and we will be totally messed up if the world is the one converting the Church."

The world has nothing to give us, rather we are the ones with something to give and that is hope to those who are despairing to restore their personal relationship with Christ and experience new life in Christ Jesus, he said. With that, people will have courage to face the present challenges with enthusiasm and hope that the future will be a better time.

Philip Kirk, SOMA UK team leader, said: "A safe journey is a journey that is hopeful. If you have nothing for which to hope for, all our strength and courage will wear out in a matter of time and the desire to pursue will deteriorate. So don't lose hope, hold on, for the Bible said, 'Hope in the Lord, for he has bright future plans for you. I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11).

Dr Katie Rhoads explained to participants during the HIV/AIDS workshops that this serious disease will finish us if special attention is not paid. Christians need to be responsible people to protect themselves and to teach the world to be on their guard and stay healthy in life. She added that during voluntary counselling tests with the participants, those who are found to be HIV/AIDS positive shouldn't lose heart and think that is the end of living. "God still loves you and has better plans for you to prosper," she said.

From Wau, the team proceeded to Tonj Archdeaconry where they conducted a second five-day conference.

The Team: Leader Philip Kirk and Jean Kirk (UK); Dr Katie Rhoads (USA); Reuben Pikwo, George Pifoch, Wyclef Rushaju, Augustine Akimanzi (Uganda); Gogonya Evans, Fred Taban (RS Sudan).



Delegates Wau



Bishop Moses and delegates, Wau

Reflections on Wau

'I couldn't have wished for more. The transport for me was the best. For starters I had never travelled in a plane I was even scared, that's why I had wanted to use a bus but also because the bus is cheaper and the security these days is not as bad between Nimule and Juba. Thank you so much for my transport and helping me make history. The previous SOMA mission opened my eyes to the fact that church needs to lead and disciple this new nation before the reverse takes root. In prayer, we need to humble ourselves and get rid of the debris in our lives and keep leaning on Him instead of our own understanding. I remembered the inscription in Evans' house that I saw on the first and last days of mission, "With God all things are possible".' SOMA UK Team member Wyclef Rushaju, Uganda.

There were many delegates waiting to give testimony about how God had touched them during the conferences in Wau. Here are a few:

- A pastor said, "There was malaria in my village. The Bishop prayed with me. I went back to my village to see a child that was dying. Today that child is well."
- A man named John said that bitterness in his life had caused all pain in his body. "I forgave and now all the pain has gone."
- A delegate said that when he received the Holy Spirit, he knew that he would not do wrong again. He was relying on the Holy Spirit, he said. This was particularly true for him in the area of sexual immorality.
- A lady with the Youth Team spoke of an incident when several men attacked her hut. The police came and drove the men away. She said that because of the Holy Spirit she was able to forgive the man who had tried to spear her.
- Daniel said that after receiving the Holy Spirit he had a vision in which he saw scattered villages. God woke him up and he said to God, "What you want me to do, I will. Before this the Word was hidden from me."
- Another Daniel said he had a nasty, open wound on his side. The hospital said there was not enough medicine, and he felt he was going to die. "I am now healed", he said, "and my child is better too."
- A man said he had a choice: go to school, go to the clinic, or come here to the conference. He chose the conference, and found he received teaching and medicine for himself and his wife, and that God has forgiven him.

Such encouragement!

SOMA Team leader Philip Kirk tells how the delegates repeatedly saw God's hand on the missions in Wau and Tonj.

God's leading We returned one evening from a session held under a tree and read an email declaring fruit hidden in a tree under which God was ministering to us. Such encouragement!

Hungry participants In both conferences participants were eager to learn. In Tonj especially, they were very hungry for the Word. To see participants who had been in session for long periods absorbed in copying the many flipchart sheets pasted to the walls was so encouraging to us.

Pastoral visits One afternoon during the HIV/AIDS workshops, participants were given a choice: to receive HIV/AIDS testing or go on a pastoral visit where they could pray with people. In Wau, 27 people joined the two of us. We broke into groups of five or six and walked to the hospital, where we prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to lead each group to pray for the sick, either in the wards or outside in the grounds resting under the shade of trees. The groups returned with their faith built up and the walk home was a march of God's army, with much joyful singing and thanksgiving.

Fire On the night before teaching on repentance and the Holy Spirit, our suitcase caught fire in our tent at around 3am. Thankfully, we woke and were able to smother the flames with clothing and get outside. Our rucksack inside the case had melted, the gifts we had taken were burned, Jean's purse, house keys and some clothes destroyed, and the clock was a melted lump! But we were safe. Thank you, Lord. On our return we learned that two of our intercessors could not sleep that night and had been praying for us.

Death A gang of cattle-rustling spies from another state were spotted near our compound and one of them was caught and very badly beaten. He was one of the people we prayed over on our visit to the clinic. He had a massive head wound. That night he died. The community were preparing themselves for a revenge attack which they believed would come within weeks. This was all happening while we were teaching about renewal in the community, peacemaking and the need to break cultural patterns of violence and retribution.

Wau Army chaplain and Team member Akim