

SOMA works for the transformation of individuals and churches and the healing of communities and their lands through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. This is through intercession and sending and receiving short-term mission teams across the Anglican Communion.

sharing

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SHARING OF MINISTRIES ABROAD

Breakthrough at the 11th hour!

The peaceful setting for the SOMA conference in far North Uganda was at dramatic odds with the scene a few years earlier, when the Karamojong community suffered under an enforced disarmament.

Still reeling from the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wounds, the ambitious vision for the recently created Diocese of North Karamoja is for the people to be lifted out of poverty, transformed by the Gospel and to live in harmony. SOMA's commitment to the Diocese through continuing intercession and prayer would address poverty and transformation, and the conference aim to bring about a more immediate healing of fractured relationships.

The region suffers the worst rates of disease in Uganda and the constant prospect of famine due to continuous drought. The tribal make-up is complex, with pastoralist Karamojong living alongside the agriculturalist Luo and hunter-gatherer lik communities.

Education is taken up by only ten per cent of the population, mostly in towns and trading centres, and there is a cultural resistance to Christianity by those who consider it 'only for the weak, for women and children'.

On top of all this, there is a significant degree of challenge within the Church, which suffers from a shortage of clergy. The first Bishop of the Diocese, the Rt Rev James Nassak, told SOMA these issues range from spiritual decline to disunity caused by political, economic, cultural and ethnic differences. In addition, church workers have little opportunity to meet up and develop their skills, and must juggle their church commitments with earning to feed their families.

The SOMA leadership conference was arranged for February in Kotido, with 125 delegates from the six archdeaconries in the

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Pastor Simon Peter dances as he leads worship under the tamarind tree, North Karamoja.

A crescendo, then pure adoration



Praying God's blessing and provision at the site of the proposed youth centre, Ezo.

With SOMA Team members representing Ezo Diocesan Partnership Links with Salisbury (UK) and Rhode Island (USA), there was a wide focus for the first days of the mission.

However, when the conference began on the Monday, the focus changed and Team Leader Ron Hart said: "It not only felt very much a SOMA conference but there was a real sense of God's holiness and presence with us which remained throughout the conference."

The teaching was extremely well received by the delegates, as were the workshops, drama and Bible studies. Evenings featured ministry – for forgiveness, healing, the fullness of the spirit – all very gentle and each time the majority of the delegates came forward for prayer. People reported healings.

"This conference was a steady and gentle time, rather than a dramatic one, but no less profound for that" said Ron.

The population is nearly all Zande, a group of around four million who live in the Republic of RS Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. They are farmers who, in former peaceful years, were self-sufficient in maize, sorghum and groundnuts, and selling their surplus in South Sudan.

Basic infrastructure is fragile, food is a challenge and the recent wars have had a devastating effect on the community.

It was too dangerous for girls to attend primary or secondary school in the past, and

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Breakthrough at the 11th hour! continued from page 1

diocese including clergy, lay readers, youth leaders, and members of church councils and Mothers' Union. Many walked vast distances to attend and, unsurprisingly, were tired when they arrived.

Reconciliation and forgiveness emerged as the themes, together exploring with the delegates ways in which they and their communities could be loosed from the bitterness and unforgiveness fed by the disarmament and years of intercommunity tension, rivalry and violence.

Translated first into Karamojong and next into Luo, both elaborate and beautifully descriptive languages, the Bible studies drew insights from Ephesians.

By lunchtime on the second day it was clear a change was needed if there was to be any kind of breakthrough. That afternoon a drama workshop enabled the delegates to work in a different way to the talks and study groups, and when the Team met for the evening review and planning session they adapted the programme.

However, although some delegates were coming forward for prayer ministry and healing ministry during each day's teaching, there was no sense of real progress on the key issues of acknowledgement, repentance and release of forgiveness. Intercession and prayer took on ever greater intensity among the Team and among the SOMA Intercessors' network.

Thankfully, the breakthrough came at the 11th hour, as the Conference was drawing to a close. It could not have been more dramatic and the atmosphere was electric, filled with the Spirit responding to heart-rending appeals for forgiveness and to prayers of penitence.

Following the presentation of certificates that afternoon, the evening's worship was exceptionally thoughtful and joyful.



The delegates had been fervent and outgoing in their worship, but this was elevated to another level and the dancing imbued with a very special Energy...

Shortly after the Team arrived home, the following message was received in an email from one of the church leaders: "The division in the Church has reduced drastically due to your teachings and prayers. We believe God will still do great things in the life of our Christians."

The following month, he added: "People are in harmony, and peace has started to prevail among the clergy and the Christians of North Karamoja Diocese. May you continue to remember us in your prayers." More recently still, he reported: "The Spirit of God is really moving."

Team: Leader Revd Stephen Dinsmore, Liz Crichton, Helen Doery, Zena Durrant, Revd Malcolm Pritchard (all UK); Nora Ananaiades (Cyprus). Bishop: James Nassak.

A crescendo, then pure adoration

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few boys receive secondary education as this entails travel along treacherous roads to boarding schools in Yambio or Nzara. The population generally does not have or use books. There are few women who have had the opportunity to learn English and they are desperate to do so.

Despite these challenges, there is a very strong faith that God will provide. This is accompanied by a deep sense of compassion and concern for families and neighbours. The women have strong social groups involving friendship, and the Mothers' Union is central to the lives of many.

Traditional beliefs have largely changed to Christianity this century, weighted towards Roman Catholicism. There are few Pentecostal churches. Many members of the Episcopal Church of Sudan in Ezo are deeply spiritual, praying together for hours at a time.



Delegates' group study.

As usual, the SOMA conference programme was modified as the particular issues and challenges faced by the delegates were revealed. The Team examined topics complementary to those previously taught by others, and also combined teaching sessions so that all delegates could attend all three workshops.

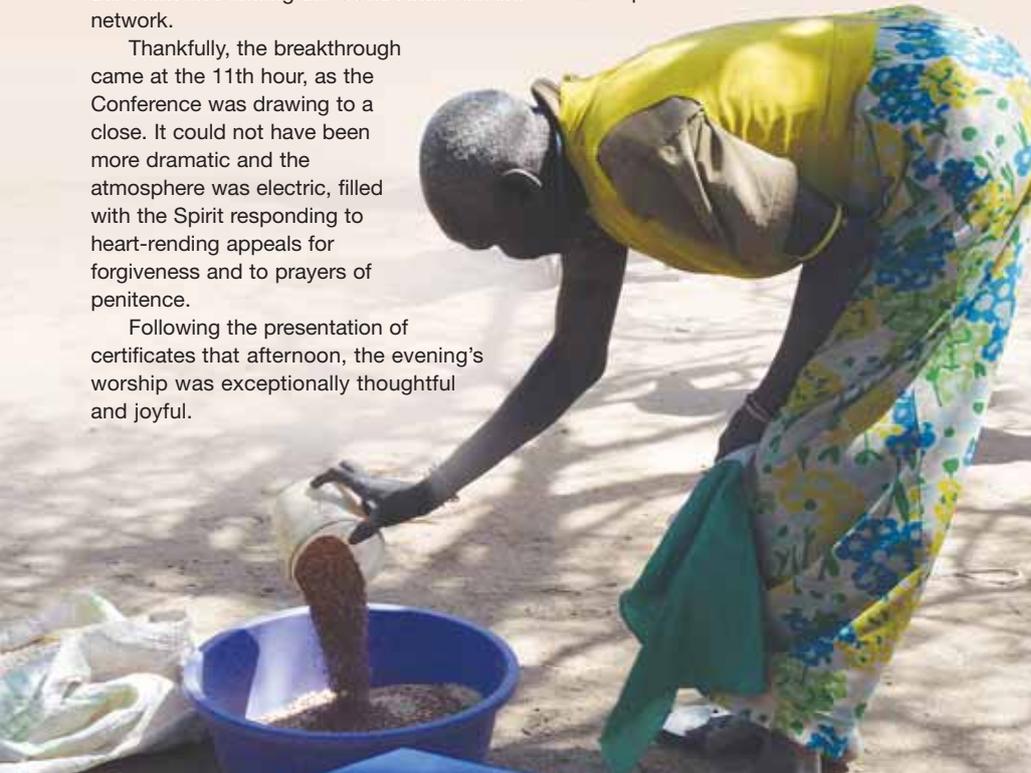
Ron added: "We had two hilarious sessions playing games using balloons."

The conference finished well, with certificates presented along with some small gifts.

On the Sunday, the Team preached in local churches and in the cathedral, where worship was led by young people with home-made electric guitars. This reached a crescendo of praise and then moved to such a gentle song that all were lost in adoration.

Team member Ian Ballentine said: "The Zande people are so gentle and welcoming. Spending time with them was a privilege I shall remember for a long time."

Team: Leader Revd Ron Hart, Revd David Harknett (both UK); Revd Ian Ballentine (Ireland); Bob Gessler (USA). Bishop: John Zawo.



Receiving the offering at the Church under the Tamarind Tree in North Karamoja.

Where grace remains squeezed

Just as Team Leader Don Brewin was finalising plans to take a 16-strong Team back to Boga in April, the word came through that the mission must be postponed.

The sudden deterioration of the security situation in that part of the Democratic Republic of Congo meant it was unsafe to travel by road, and there was serious strain in relationships within the diocese.

Instead, Bishop William Bahemuka invited Don and one or two others to see him to discern what the Lord may be saying about finding the path to reconciliation in the Diocese. The natural choice of ambassador was the Revd John Awodi, Anglican Chaplain at Mulago Hospital in Kampala, a key Team member on last year's mission to Boga.

Intercessors play a vital role in our missions, but this time their support would be doubly crucial with so few people bearing such a heavy load, and the Intercessors were rapidly alerted to the newly sensitive situation.

Further complications emerged: Bishop William would be at a meeting of the House of Bishops in Kinshasa, many hundreds of miles from Boga; the two crucial signatories needed for the visa application were away; there were communication problems – nothing new for any mission but particularly unhelpful in such delicate circumstances; and there were several hurdles relating to travel.

"Some wondered whether, with all these and other discouragements, the Lord might be telling us not to go," said Don. "However, there was no such suggestion from the Intercessors, and another positive sign was that some unsolicited gifts of money came in which enabled us more or less to meet the increased cost of this mission. So, by God's grace and with a real awareness of prayer, we felt it right to persevere."

Don and John changed their travel schedule in order to meet Bishop William before he had to leave for Kinshasa, travelling from Entebbe on separate flights.



They met the Bishop in Bunia, where they began to grasp the complexity of the situation.

The first meeting was connected with Cité Anglican Church in Bunia, the location of last year's successful Stage 1 SOMA Conference. This church, with its potential to be a powerful symbol of Christian unity and source of Christian witness in the town, had become infected by aspects of the conflict.

Then began a concerted three-and-a-half days of meetings with the groups connected with the situation, including Diocesan staff, clergy, lay leaders and Mothers' Union members. "Some people did not want to meet us; others, understandably, would only meet us on condition of anonymity," said Don.

"We were very aware there were key people we were unable to meet – some were on holiday, and others, such as three Archdeacons, were in areas from which Bunia was dangerous to reach. If there had been more time, we would even have tried to go there and we would have tried to bring groups of people together to encourage them to listen and speak to one another.

"John and I were also hampered by language. Most of the communication was in French, which John does not speak and I only a little, or Congolese Kiswahili, which neither of us understands. We were very dependent on translators, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

"However, this language barrier also implies another one – the difficulty whenever one works in a cross-cultural situation, not only of understanding what a person does say, but what they are not saying. It is hard to read the faces of people we have only just met!

"When SOMA went to the Diocese in 2012, we were given the phrase 'grace has got squeezed out' – a result of 140 or so years of unceasing conflict and stress. We were very much saddened to realise the phrase still stands. It leads to two other spiritual deficits: unwillingness to reach out to one another in forgiveness



Don Brewin: "We thank God there have been some positive changes of heart."

and a lack of heartfelt Intercession in the Diocese."

After John and Don returned to Kampala, John resumed work commitments and Don focused on translating documents from French to English. They also prepared for meeting Bishop William on his way back to Bunia from Kinshasa.

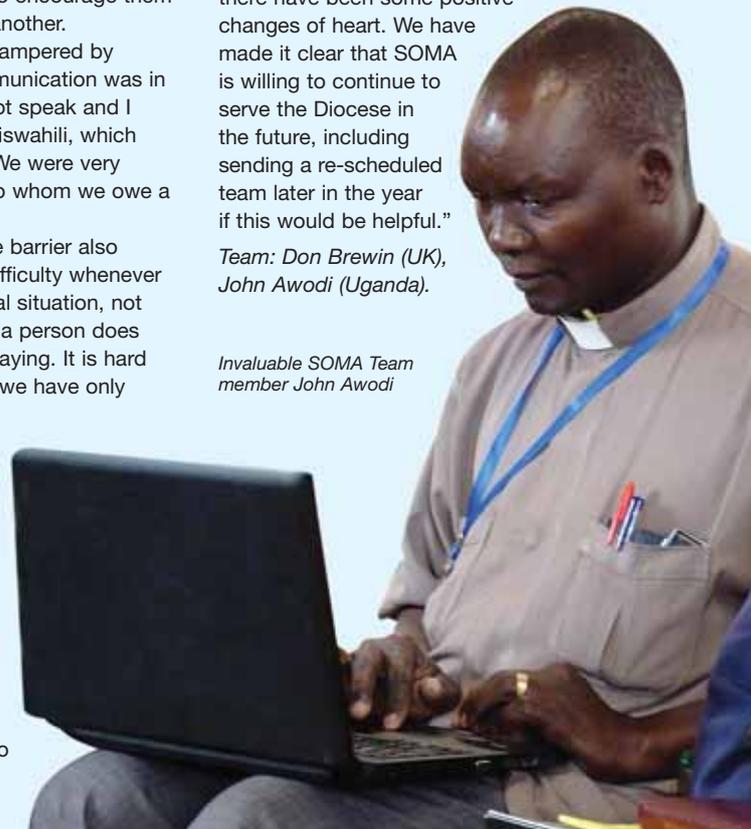
"This was an encouraging meeting," said Don. "Bishop William felt that he had been heard with much sympathy by his fellow bishops. The requested Commission of Enquiry had been set up; and people were encouraged by the Archbishop to do nothing that could further exacerbate the situation.

"We pray that this exhortation to keep calm will be heard."

Don now reports: "We thank God there have been some positive changes of heart. We have made it clear that SOMA is willing to continue to serve the Diocese in the future, including sending a re-scheduled team later in the year if this would be helpful."

Team: Don Brewin (UK), John Awodi (Uganda).

Invaluable SOMA Team member John Awodi



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 raise their own travel and accommodation costs, missions 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 possible.

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

Future SOMA Teams

RS Sudan	Wau
DR Congo	Bukavu
Tanzania	Rorya
RS Sudan	Wonduruba Youth
Kenya	Lakes Region Dioceses Youth
Rwanda	Kigali
Uganda	Kinkiizi
DR Congo	Boga
Tanzania	Kibondo
DR Congo	Katanga
Kenya	Nakuru
DR Congo	Two Kasais
Tanzania	Shinyanga

For further details please contact the SOMA office at info@somauk.org or call +44 (0) 1460 279737.

intercession@somauk.org

Called to intercession? If you are, think you may be, would like to be or are exploring if you are, then do contact us! Intercession is the 'hidden' half of SOMA's ministry. We are always keen to hear from people who would like to pray regularly. SOMA Intercessors take on a vital commitment, are an absolutely indispensable part of SOMA's ministry, and play an invaluable and deeply appreciated role at home whenever SOMA Teams are abroad. SOMA Intercessors are supported both by regular Prayer Briefings and support Teams with live, two-way information by email when SOMA Teams are abroad.

Please contact Kate Brankin at intercession@somauk.org or call the SOMA office on +44 (0) 1460 279737.

SOMA Parish Mission Partners

"I thank God for leading SOMA to Africa. The Holy Spirit led the Team here"

"Every SOMA Team I've brought back to the UK has had a massive impact on the DNA of mission in my church"

Being a SOMA Parish Mission Partner builds a live, active and mutually beneficial relationship between your parish and SOMA, envisioning and renewing your church for Holy Spirit ministry and mission at home as well as abroad.

SOMA Parish Mission Partners receive

- SHARING for each member of the congregation
- a SOMA speaker for a Sunday about once a year
- invitations, information and encouragement for leaders and members of the congregation to participate in SOMA mission teams abroad and for Intercessors to join the SOMA Intercessors Network
- regular communication with the designated SOMA parish contact, as well as the Incumbent & staff team

In return SOMA Parish Mission Partners

- encourage prayer for SOMA in services, groups and by individuals
- regularly communicate news about SOMA to their congregations
- encourage individuals to get involved by joining Teams, becoming SOMA Intercessors, hosting visitors, attending SOMA activities
- seek to support SOMA financially

For further information or to discuss the scheme, contact Stephen Dinsmore at info@somauk.org or +44 (0) 1460 279737.

Come on a Team!

We are always seeking Team members for SOMA missions. So, if you are willing to take a step of faith, push out into the unknown and move out of your comfort zone then being a SOMA Team member could well be for you!

Of course, Teams include those who can teach and preach, but if you can tell your faith story and pray with others you could be part of a team too. Team members fund their own travel and accommodation – yet in the past five years not one person who has said 'yes' in faith to being on a Team has not seen the Lord's provision, sometimes in remarkable ways.

For an 'application to be considered for a SOMA Team', simply contact SOMA via email, Facebook, phone or post. We look forward to hearing from you!