

'Humbled and so thankful'



Tipere schoolchildren welcome the SOMA team to Kajo-Keji

ENCOURAGING youth ministry and developing young leaders was high on the agenda for a mission in South Sudan.

Four of the team, all new to SOMA, had expressed uncertainty as to what they would experience, but were soon caught up in the warmth of welcome and fellowship they encountered from their hosts in Kajo-Keji.

Led by Andrew Blyth, the team from Aylesbury Holy Trinity came home revelling in the Lord's goodness. Team member Andrew Henderson said:

"The team returned in great spirit, rejoicing in how God has used an inexperienced team and blessed us as we shared with the beautiful people of South Sudan. God has enriched us and taught us so much."

"The support of all the intercessors leaves us humbled and so thankful."

The "two Andrews" had travelled to the Diocese of Kajo-Keji twice before to create and develop a partnership. In addition to deepening friendships and making new ones, this mission enabled the team to grow in their

understanding of issues faced by believers in a country still heavily scarred by the effects of civil war.

The team of six led an annual clergy conference on the theme of Developing Christian Leadership, with Nehemiah, Deborah and Peter all models to learn from. A lot was packed into just three days. Delegates were hungry to build their ministry and very open to new ideas, and young leaders were keen to bring change, which was welcomed by the elders.

New styles of music are being encouraged, and Andrew B's wife Nicki took to the drums, even leading exuberant singing including "Jesus Loves Me" to the beat of Queen's *We Will Rock You*.

One emerging theme is the need to go out to where the people are. Andrew H recalled: "The image of Mama Jane, Bishop Anthony's wife, pumping water at the well surrounded by chattering girls and happy laughter will stay with us for a long time.

"On Sunday came the invitation to preach and give testimony at local churches in both English- and Bari-speaking services. Seeing a packed church with a queue of enthusiastic worshippers at the door,

still to get in, gave great delight, and conversation that night spoke of the shape future visits might take.

"God's gracious leading enabled each member of the team to contribute in their own personal style through testimony, teaching and with words of encouragement. Words from intercessors came at key moments and brought home the vital part they play in any mission.

"On our return, Andrew B reminded the congregation that the six of us were just an expression of the 'all' who had sent us out."

continued on page 2



The SOMA Kajo-Keji team

Clergy couples share cares

IT was clear from the beginning of the conference in Bunia that there was a great sense of anticipation.

This was the first time that clergy, their husbands and wives had been invited to attend a conference together, with the aim of addressing issues that cause them stress. The opportunity translated quickly into a deep openness on sensitive matters and revealed mutual willingness to engage in discussion and questions.

SOMA UK has had a close relationship with the Diocese of

Boga, DR Congo, since before the first mission in 2012, and has worked alongside Bishop William through difficult periods there. Don Brewin, who led this return mission in March, hailed the openness as a mark of the developing sense of unity and "a wonderful testament to the work of the Holy Spirit".

Travel to the city of Bunia from Kampala in Uganda, where the team gathered, was faster than the usual 24-plus hours, through difficult, sometimes dangerous, terrain. This time it took a day; the team travelled by road,

continued on page 2



Divine light at Cité Church, Bunia

'Humbled and so thankful' continued from page 1

"We pray that all that we have seen and heard will be shared widely and lead to fruitful outcomes in the years ahead," said Andrew H.

Despite careful preparation to understand the massive cultural and lifestyle differences, the reality can still hit hard. Team member Mike was deeply affected by the astonishing poverty, the slums and the continuing



Ali Wheeler giving IT advice

practice of child sacrifice; and he was profoundly moved by the love and commitment of people with nothing in worldly terms, and by the enthusiasm of clergy delegates and Sunday congregations.

Inspiring

Andrew B said the team returned with stories of great hospitality, faith and hope, despite the impact of severe poverty, continuing armed struggles, health and social needs.

"We have so much to learn about faith and discipleship through building relationships with Christians in other parts of the world."

He felt humbled by the opportunity to share and pray with such faithful people, and inspired to be able to pass on a constant stream of God-given prophecies and words of encouragement from intercessors in the UK.

One intercessor relished having responsibility and a role, even though

she wasn't going to Kajo-Keji herself. "It was a real privilege to be asked to be an intercessor," she said.

"I have seen very clear answers to prayer. I have also been encouraged since the mission to learn that the

"It was a real privilege to be asked to be an intercessor. I have seen very clear answers to prayer"

messages, verses and pictures sent on were from and used by God. It was great to know the prayer was answered and I was praying according to God's will.

"Also, someone else praying was waking up often at night and saw this as a way she was being attacked. I was waking up often and saw it as a privilege because I could pray more often. I thank God for keeping me safe, as well as the team."



Kajo-Keji delegates learning more about Nehemiah

Team: Leader Revd Andrew Blyth, Nicki Blyth, Mike Fulker, Revd Andrew Henderson, Ro Knight, Ali Wheeler, all from Aylesbury Holy Trinity, UK; Bishop Anthony Poggo; intercessor coordinator Kate Brankin.



Read more about praying into this mission on Page 4

Clergy couples share cares continued from page 1

crossed Lake Albert by ferry to Kasenyi, DRC, and reached Bunia along a very bumpy track two hours later.

Don noted: "The journey would have been even quicker if we had not been delayed for some considerable time at the DRC immigration office in Kasenyi, where it was insisted that we paid an additional levy for those who were entering DRC for the first time."

Each day of the conference in Cité Church began with one of the team leading an Anglican version of Morning Worship (from Kenya, Uganda or the UK), from a booklet previously prepared for this diocese to encourage church leaders to use modern services rather than a translation of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

On the first day, after the introductions, the delegates were divided into separate groups of men and women to list anonymously their

main areas of stress. These ideas governed the week's teaching that followed, addressing intimate areas of concern as well as such topics as how to cope with pastoral demands and financial pressures. Some worries related to diocesan policy, others to the delegates' way of living and working. Each day ended with praise and worship, with testimony and an opportunity to receive prayer.

The conference was due to end on the Saturday, but insecurity on some roads outside Bunia saw the final session brought forward to Friday. On Sunday, the team divided to preach at five services – three at Cité Church, the others at Town Church and Yambe.

Kingdom significance

Don reflected: "Although the mission went more or less as planned, we were very conscious of attempts by the evil one to upset the arrangements. This is an indication of the fact that God intended something significant for the Kingdom to come out of this. Even though we are aware of this, and prepared for it, these attacks never cease to be debilitating."

Examples included the usual problems with renewing passports and getting DRC visas; illness among team members or families, which affected most of the team at one time or another; unexpected bureaucratic costs; phones now having to be

re-registered at a central office, which is not nearby; and the box of teaching materials getting wet at the bottom of the ferryboat, spoiling some items.

"One of the frustrations of this mission was the frequent breakdown of mobile-phone contact, which meant that text messages were not sent and received by us as consistently as we would have liked," said Don.

Prayer essential

"But we thank God, as always, for the essential prayer for the mission and team, a support that came to the team from the knowledge that we were being prayed for on a daily basis. How vital this ministry of intercession is, as day after day new problems and spiritual attacks emerged and were, by God's grace, overcome.

"For those of us on the team, an abiding memory of the Lord at work was seeing couples affirm and embrace one another as they received their certificates on the final afternoon. This was a tangible mark of a new sense of partnership in the Gospel, which we pray will be strengthened as time goes on."

However, Don warned against complacency, as several senior leaders in the diocese continue to experience serious attacks – physical and spiritual – and the forthcoming resignation of Archbishop Henri



Blessed worship led by choir in Cité Church, Bunia

Isingoma this summer will affect all dioceses in the province.

In addition, there are the national elections later this year. "It is vital that Christians of different denominations stand together against the threats of violence which, sadly, have accompanied these elections in the past," Don said.

Bishop William now wants young people to become fully involved in the reconciliation process in the diocese. Their active involvement in church matters is usually restricted to singing in the choirs, so plans are in the pipeline for a youth leaders' conference later this year.

"Please pray for God's will to be done in each of these crucial areas," said Don.

Team: Leader Don Brewin, UK; Michael Asaba, Rose Kanyunyuzi Asaba, DR Congo; Revd Etienne Kabagambe, Faith Kiseembo, Revd Canon Hellen Oneka, Uganda; Ven Obadiah Mushene, Revd Capt Joshua Opondo, Kenya; Bishop William Bahemuka; intercessor coordinator Kate Brankin.



The SOMA team at Boga with Bishop William and his wife, Mama Irene

Team gifts ‘shine out’



Choir at St Thomas Kroo, Freetown

THE varied experience of the team members who travelled to Sierra Leone in April combined to generate a rapport that strengthened everything they did.

The country is recovering from the horrors of the ebola epidemic, and the SOMA team’s mission was to bring hope, encouragement and teaching that will inspire and assist the Church as it seeks to help the whole nation get back on its feet.

The five-day renewal conference in St George’s Cathedral was framed by church services on both Sundays around the capital and diocese of Freetown, at which the team members preached and received encouraging feedback. In fact, the second Sunday’s morning services were even better attended than the first.

But there was – and remains – no room for complacency. Following a sparsely attended evensong on the second Sunday, the team gathered for a session of appraisal with local key clergy, and a retired canon pulled no punches about the challenges facing the Church in Sierra Leone.

Team member Simon said: “They were beyond feeling the need to be cautious or diplomatic in their observations. There are many who dearly love and serve the Lord in the Diocese of Freetown.

“Many – particularly the young – have left the church, but in many cases they have simply moved to other churches. It was strongly expressed that to retain those who remain, and to

be effective in reaching out to these churches’ parishes, the church needs to be both more relevant and its members more faithfully committed in obedience to the Lord.”

Fear of rejection

The stronghold of Freemasonry is still evident within the wider Krio society and is not yet fully addressed by the clergy, but cracks are appearing. A further challenge is that the Anglican Church adheres to traditional modes of worship, including rigid ritual, but is “competing” with a multiplicity of more flamboyant Pentecostal churches.

Among the most rewarding activities, therefore, were the outreach sessions, which demonstrated the potential for church growth.

Team leader Ken recalled: “On some afternoons we were scheduled to do door-to-door or open-air outreach. I had anticipated this with a degree of misgiving, as it had been so long since I had last done this kind of witnessing.

“However, I was teamed up with the pastor of a church in the dockyards corner of town, and soon found myself approaching a group of men hanging out in the middle of a roundabout. Probably most were casual labourers, a few were smoking marijuana.

“I was amazed at how quickly I was able to catch their attention and develop rapport with them as I told them about Jesus. Several prayed to accept Christ, and the pastor took down their names to look up again later.

“I was amazed at how quickly I was able to catch their attention and develop rapport with them as I told them about Jesus”

“We moved on to a quieter spot and I varied my approach with another group that included a couple of women. The pastor took down the names of a few more who prayed with me and were willing to be contacted again.

“My hope is that the pastor really will make an effort to reach out to his community after seeing how responsive so many were with a friendly readiness to talk about Jesus.”

This mission brought back particular memories for Ken, a church planter in Sierra Leone for 17 years, and for Harry, a Sierra Leonean for whom this was his first SOMA mission and saw him return to the country where his mother still lives.

The first SOMA mission in Freetown was in 1989 and Thomas, the leader of the second in 2005, is now Bishop of Freetown. This third visit was an unusual one for SOMA, in that the programme featured a two-day conference for clergy

James Tumwesigye and Simon Holloway in Freetown



Rev. Yvonne Johnson with a member of the congregation



SOMA team leader Ken Wiebe, right, listens to local viewpoints in Freetown

alongside leadership seminars in Port Loko and Makeni, with the team then further splitting up to travel widely across the diocese for the next three days – including to Muslim communities – and a youth seminar and lay retreat on the Saturday.

The team debrief revealed a strong sentiment that each member had

continued on page 4



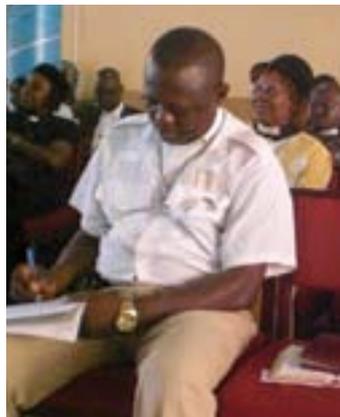
Team gifts 'shine out' continued from page 3

recognised the purposes for which they had been called by God, and it was clear where each individual's contributions were effective.

Ken said: "As the week progressed I developed an increasing appreciation for the bishop's and dean's priorities for the mission. Though I still would have preferred a more clergy-focused mission, I can see the benefits for their diocese of a programme that also aimed at laity in different towns, at the youth, and at outreach and congregational revival.

"My experience of the mission exceeded my expectations because my team members were so capable and prepared to deal with being divided into smaller ministry units. There was satisfaction in seeing team members shine in using their gifts."

Team: Leader Revd Ken Wiebe, UK; Pastor Steve Cleary, Helen Doery, Revd Simon Holloway, Ian McColl, all UK; Capt James Tumwesigye, Uganda; Bishop Thomas Wilson; intercessor coordinator Helen Foster.



Clergy seminar at Freetown

Get involved

 **INVITE** To invite a SOMA team, email stephen.dinsmore@somauk.org

 **PRAY** Find today's live prayer nugget on our website home page; find our full Daily Prayer Diary via the button there; or receive a "new each morning" prayer request from SOMA via Twitter or Facebook. It is upon Intercession that SOMA's ministry and mission is founded. SOMA intercessors are supported by regular, extensive Prayer Briefings and with live, two-way emails when teams are on mission. Read more on our website: click on 'Prayer and Intercession'; or contact Kate Brankin at intercession@somauk.org

 **GIVE** We really value financial gifts. To resource SOMA's ministry go to our website: click on 'Get Involved' then 'Support Us'; click on the 'Donate' button on the top right of any web page; or email steve.finch@somauk.org

 **PARTNER** A SOMA Parish Mission Partnership builds a live, active relationship between your parish and SOMA, inspiring your congregations for Holy Spirit ministry and mission at home as well as abroad. Partners receive: *Sharing* newsletters, *Update* with news and information, a SOMA speaker about once a year; encouragement to participate in everything from SOMA missions to our intercessors' network. For their part, our partners encourage prayer for SOMA; regularly communicate our news to their congregations; encourage individuals to get involved in teams, as intercessors and supporters; and seek to support SOMA financially, when they can. Visit our website – click on 'Get Involved' then 'Parish Mission Partners' – email stephen.dinsmore@somauk.org or call 01460 279737.

 **TEAM** For an 'application to be considered for a SOMA Team', simply contact SOMA via email, Facebook, Twitter, phone or post. Read more on our website: click on 'Join a Team'. We look forward to hearing from you!

 **FUTURE MISSIONS** include:

DR Congo	Boga Youth
South Sudan	Awerial
DR Congo	Bukavu
North India	Orissa
Kenya	Thika
Pakistan	Peshawar
South India	Nandyal

Praying into a mission

THE team in Kajo-Keji found that words from intercessors came at key moments, illustrating the vital role they play during any mission.

The very varied extracts below are from the prayers and pictures that winged their way to South Sudan in April:

"The verse 'I can do all things through him who gives me strength' Phil 4:13 keeps coming to me. Christ enables, and promises his presence and strength. In turn, words of testimony will strengthen and encourage those who hear them."

"As I prayed for the team, I found myself thinking about ratchets, which as far as I understand is a mechanism to hold something in place ready for the next stage of the ratchet process. Then I had an image of the inside of a signal box of a preserved railway. The levers that are pulled operate on a ratchet system and need a lot of strength and experience to move them. Then I saw the points on the rail track move, so that the train changed direction on to another track. I won't start putting interpretations on this, just to say that the word was 'ratchet', then

the signal box lever and then the rails changing."

"Luke 8:1 The seed that fell on good soil yielded a crop a hundred more times than that which was sown."

"I had a picture of green shoots bursting through."

And the team sent the following by text:

"Testimonies from delegates at end of conference: "Your coming here means that we are not alone"; "we see transformation for our leaders"; "I have learned the power of prayer"; "I received a revelation from God of the same Bible verse as was given to a SOMA intercessor Phil 4:13".

"Please pray for energy for team as we preach twice in 3 different churches – Andrew B at the cathedral, Andrew H and Ro at Kimu and Ali at St Luke's. Our thanks to the team for their support and messages."

The following day, intercessors received this message: "Church visits went very well. Much encouragement given by leaders and members of the churches."

"Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

48 HOURS WITH
soma
SHARING OF MINISTRIES ABROAD

Why not join us at our time away in High Leigh Conference Centre?

Where is that? Hoddesdon, north of London and easy to reach

When is it? 1pm Tuesday 11th October to 2pm Thursday 13th October 2016

Who will be there? Staff, trustees, team members, musicians and more

What happens there? Hear more about SOMA; more about missions past and future; meet friends old and new; share fellowship; prayer and praise with traditional and modern music; reflect and be refreshed...

Open to everyone, accommodation and all meals included, cost £165

Email judith.russell@somauk.org or phone 01460 279737

More on our website www.somauk.org

Book soon; we look forward to seeing you