

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.

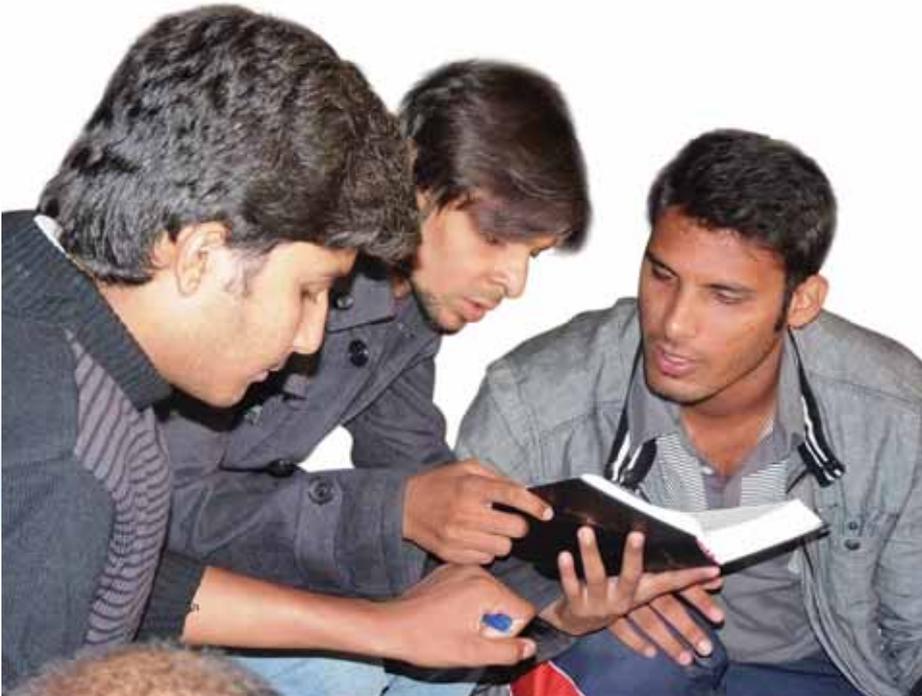
sharing

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SHARING OF MINISTRIES ABROAD

Spirit ignites!



Delegates' bible study.

THREE ingredients are required to start a fire – oxygen, fuel and heat. Without all three, there can be no fire.

Last November, a SOMA Team of three flew to the North-West Frontier in Pakistan, to evaluate the situation there and the potential for future ministry; the invitation was to “breathe the air in Peshawar”. In July, two of that Team returned with two further UK members for a visit to encourage young Christians at a conference high in the hills.

Shortly after their arrival at the retreat centre, an intercessor in the UK had a clear word of what was needed for the young people to be envisioned and encouraged. Intercessor coordinator Kate Brankin texted the message she had been given: “The necessity of knowing the small spot where one ignites a large system, either electrically with a switch or where to apply a match, and to pray that the team find the ignition point at the youth conference.”

Two of the ingredients were in place – the “air breathed” and the “fuel” of young people hungry for encounter with the Spirit. Could the Team find the spark that would ignite the spiritual fire of these young people?

Team Leader Stephen Dinsmore said: “The Christians in Peshawar are an oppressed minority, discriminated against and sometimes persecuted. Denied justice and equality, they are regularly and corruptly disadvantaged. In some areas they are in constant danger of being caught in the Sunni-Shia intra-Muslim violence – some youth told us that they were rarely able to even leave their homes.

“SOMA's presence was itself a terrific encouragement, our ministry to equip, empower by the Spirit, envision, encourage and enable was deeply appreciated. The Team, though small, proved to be entirely appropriately equipped.”

This second visit was a fruit of the first and came at the instigation of the Diocesan Youth Executive. The sessions focusing on the young people's own discipleship and equipping the youth for their ministry to children.

The summer camp was titled ‘Disciples Following Jesus’, addressing issues identified by the young people at the 2012 SOMA visit, including:

- The generation gap with church leaders that meant they did not feel heard
- A need to know the basics “even about the second birth” and being “a true Christian”
- Discrimination shown in marking their exams at university and in jobs
- Pressure to become Muslim in order to be offered employment
- Lack of faithful youth fellowships
- Negative peer pressure
- Lack of guidance for the future
- Drug and alcohol abuse among the very poor
- Low confidence and courage, needed to create future leaders

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Thank you, SOMA!

Spirit ignites!

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Their views were endorsed by the Peshawar Diocesan News, which reported: "The Church in Pakistan, particularly in the Khyber Pakhtuemkhwa Province, is struggling to maintain its identity amongst the militancy and extremism. Much poverty, indifferent attitude in the job market, biased legislation, prejudice in the schools' curriculum, unfair representation in the parliament and marked social difference has made the Christians as poorest of the poor in Pakistan. Thus there is a continuous struggle for survival of the Church in Pakistan."

The Team knew they must place their trust in the Lord that the timetable, programme and content would become apparent as the Conference progressed.

Despite the concerted efforts of the intercessors back in the UK, and of those praying in Peshawar, there were hitches, but these were short-lived thanks to the stepping-up of specific prayers – acclimatising to the altitude of 8,200 feet, minor illness, power cuts, and the lack of water at the retreat centre when the pump broke down.

Team member Janet Dinsmore kept up the flow of information to the intercessors back home, and within a few hours was able to text: "Thanks so much. The water is back for now, almost as soon as you all prayed. Thank the Lord. Please keep praying as there are frequent power cuts and unreliable pumps and generators."



Delegate sharing.

More importantly, she was able to reveal in the same text: "Give thanks for the young people's response to praying in the power of the Spirit for each other.

It was powerful."

Then, 24 hours later, she broke the news that there was spiritual fire: "Please give thanks for the excellent involvement. Fantastic openness and rapport. Ignition!"

Fellow Team member Lindy Cameron was stunned by all she witnessed: "The incredible mutual trust that built so quickly between Team and young people,

the young people's hunger to learn and experience more of God, the obvious change in many, many lives as the Holy Spirit met with them.

"My heart is broken again for a new people group. Awesome God, who meets his children just where they are."

Team: Leader Revd Stephen Dinsmore, Lindy Cameron, Janet Dinsmore, Revd Alan Price (all UK).



Inset: Alan illustrates the point. Below: Peshawar worship.



For comfort, courage and hope

THE front page story was written before the horrendous bomb blasts at All Saints, Peshawar, writes Stephen Dinsmore. On Sunday 22 September, following the main service, with the church courtyard tightly packed with hundreds of worshippers, two suicide bombers, affiliates of the Taliban, entered the courtyard and detonated their bombs. Eighty people were killed and 120 injured, the congregation was traumatised, the Peshawar Christian community distraught. The attack caused consternation among the already discriminated against and disadvantaged Christians of Pakistan.

Pictures from the scene show the physical damage wreaked by the shrapnel-filled bombs – pools of blood, body parts strewn across the courtyard, the distraught, the injured, the dying and the bodies of the dead. The psychological, emotional and spiritual injuries are also apparent in the faces of the victims: inconsolable grief, bewilderment, confusion, uncontrollable weeping, outrage, pain.

Only the month before I had preached at All Saints with the Team of Janet, Lindy and Alan. We were deeply shocked at the news; some of those injured and killed, especially among the youth, were our friends.

In this close-knit community, many lost family. One friend wrote: "Most of our brothers and sisters were died some of them injured and some of them were seriously injured and admit in ICU, half of the Christian families Peshawar were totally finished, very horrible condition here." We were told: "A worker in the Cathedral lost 5 of her nearest family." Another friend lost his two children, his wife badly injured.

What we can all do is to pray, indeed that is what they have requested of us, pray for all those suffering – for comfort, courage and hope. For Bishop Humphrey and the church leaders. For those now fearful of leaving their homes, for those losing hope, for the bereaved, the dying, the traumatised.



Bishop Humphrey comforting the injured.

Step by step to forgiveness



For the fullness of the Spirit, Mahagi.

FEAR of the unknown is a common experience for all who sign up for service with a SOMA Team.

The excitement of being accepted for a mission, especially to 'a place less visited', can be rapidly elbowed aside by the thought: "What **have** I let myself in for?"

Mahagi Team member Eva Mdachi summed this up when she reflected on her time with the people of this area of DR Congo. "Most of us on the Team had 'fear for the unknown' but the warm welcome from the people of Mahagi made us feel at home and relaxed," she recalled.

"Language was the next obstacle but, after praying together and allowing ourselves to be used, we found ourselves backing each other up and supporting one another."

SOMA Director Stephen Dinsmore saw that it was right to use the vision and skills of six people from All Saints' Church Cathedral in Nairobi, Kenya, who planned the programme for young people and clergy in conjunction with Provincial Youth Coordinator Revd Bisoke Balikenga.

Mahagi is home to the Alur people and is a key town in the province and in north-eastern DRC. It was chosen as the venue because the diocese felt neglected following various conflicts. Mahagi is also home to the provincial youth training centre and so it was natural to hold the youth conference there.

Joint Team Leader Revd Francis Awando said: "It was interesting to note the age bracket of the youth involved, which stretched to about 45 years of age; this may be attributed to the long stretch of civil war within the country that has hindered progress."

Eva said: "The Mahagi mission was an exemplary experience for me ... I saw the work of the Holy Spirit manifested in a way I could not have imagined to be used. It is one thing to know the Lord but it is another to really see His power manifested in people – that is what really happened in Mahagi.

"There was brokenness, there was healing, and there was forgiveness and reconciliation. Above all, the participants were opened up to hear from the Lord."

None of this could have been achieved without the Team paying great heed to the reactions of the delegates and being aware of the need to change and adapt during the course of the seminar. One of the major challenges was language, most of the Team expected to use English, but on arrival it was clear that Kiswahili, French, Lingala and local dialect Alur were preferred – Congo has more than 400 tribes – so the Team adapted their presentations to Kiswahili.

"Our programme changed on the ground and we had to let the Holy Spirit take full control," said Eva, recollecting the Team's heightened sensitivity once they were in situ.

"The Lord taught me through this mission that He was in control and it was not about us – our dependency was totally on the work of the Holy Spirit and we were merely vessels. This was seen in the success of the mission, especially in the area of forgiveness and reconciliation, and trust by participants in opening up their hearts to us."

Francis recalled: "The Lord came through for us in a mighty way, enabling us to communicate in Kiswahili without losing meaning during interpretation, and we used interpreters to interpret Kiswahili to Alur as some delegates preferred Alur.

"We were moved by the passion and vigour that the people had. The youth exhibited their talent in playing the guitar; be it the acoustic or the bass guitar, they played them very well. Surely the Lord has blessed them in this area. They led well in praise and adoration throughout the sessions.

"All in all it was a humbling and encouraging experience to see people from humble backgrounds, with a hunger and thirst for growth in the Word of God. Their hospitality was overwhelming."

Bisoke was equally delighted with the outcome of the seminar, and said: "I am so happy for the work done in Mahagi by the team because many people came to Jesus and many people asked for forgiveness. Pastors asked forgiveness among themselves and also with some people.

"Really, that seminar brings another image to me; it means reconciliation is the main things for the Christian all the time, and it is a process which can take time, which need to go step by step.

Continued on page 4.



...for the healing of communities and their lands...



Deep in prayer, Mahagi.



Heartfelt embrace after teaching on reconciliation.

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

A positive impact!

DESPITE the considerable hardships of life in remote northern Uganda, the people there are thanking God for all they have.

Intense heat and drought destroyed much of this year's crops and grazing in North Karamoja Diocese, yet a few showers of rain yielded great praise to the Lord for sowing fresh hope that some crops may yet grow to keep famine at bay.

SOMA ministered in the Diocese in February to encourage, empower and equip clergy and leaders. This was in a context of the need to heal fractured relationships damaged during the violent disarmament of clans and by decades of violence between the three tribes competing to make a living in this harsh environment.

From North Karamoja, mission and youth coordinator Revd Alfred Okello has written:

"Another thing that God has done to the land of Karamoja is the provision of Peace which is currently prevailing and has given freedom of movement to the people and pastoralists which has eliminated threats from cattle raiders and road incidences, they graze their animals without fear from any enemies.

As North Karamoja Diocese, we want to give our great appreciations to our partners and friends of Karamoja for their prayer and material support. We do appreciate.

"The most vibrant people and highest population in the churches of North Karamoja are the youth and the children. We thank God for the life and the spirit He is planting in the youth, and church activities are being run by the youth especially; Bible studies, preaching, intercessions, leading prayers, organising short conferences, doing community work and helping the needy in the villages, door-to-door outreaches and many other important programmes of the Church.

"This is the spirit of God working in the youth and changing their lives and bringing many youth and elderly people into salvation, of which we give thanks and honour to God for these miraculous things God is doing among them.

"I would like to tell you that your coming to our Diocese as SOMA Team has created and it is still creating positive impact on our church leaders and Christians as a whole.

"Be blessed and continue praying with us."

Step by step to forgiveness Continued from page 3.

"We thought our Pastors in Mahagi have already been reconciled but we found that some problems were there; but now we are happy the way each person was clear to tell the truth, and the one which was within their heart.

"Thanks a lot for your prayers to us, and thanks a lot for Soma for your help. God bless you."

The fruits, as always with a SOMA mission, were not solely harvested by the seminar delegates. Team members

invariably gain personally from the experience, an outcome best summarised by Eva: "I did get affirmation through my participation... I would like to be part of a team in the future as I realised that was where I belong and I am willing to be used of His work."

Team: Leaders Revd Francis Awando and Capt Georgia Omwa CA with Gray Gachanja, Eva Mdachi, Sam Odunga, Emmah Waitbaka, all from All Saints' in Nairobi; Mahagi Provincial Youth Coordinator Revd Bisoke Balikenga.

The Team, Mahagi. From left, Emmah Waitbaka, Eva Mdachi, Grey Gachanja, Sam Odunga, Georgia Omwa and Francis Awando.

