

'Hunger for the truth'

WISDOM and experience are great assets on a SOMA mission, but they are by no means the only gifts that are considered when selecting team members.

Almost half the team participating in the mission in East Ruwenzori, Uganda, in May were in their early 20s, and proved time and again their value during the conference. Team leader David observed: "Having these four on the team was excellent, it brought fun, energy and much opportunity to the team and the conference. They were certainly put out onto deep water and did not sink."

In fact, every team member brought particular strength and gifting to the conference, and David paid tribute to the way in which they all worked together and with the delegates to build towards a sense of unity with each other and with God. "Flexible programming and a highly flexible team," he observed.

"Taking lay people to a lay people's conference was fruitful. If we had been all clergy it would not have been as helpful." However, he was particularly pleased to have ordained Zimbabwean minister Blessing on board.

"When an African speaks to an African conference, God moves in power. For example, Blessing spoke on



Moving through the prophetic prayer tunnel in East Ruwenzori

the danger of mixing African cultural traditions with Christianity – the conviction was deep and was a hugely important challenge," said David.

With six of the nine-strong team from the same SOMA mission partner church near Milton Keynes, there was already a strong bond by the time they arrived at the Christian-run guesthouse in Kamwenge after a tiring nine-hour

journey by road from Entebbe airport. This was just as well, as the following day – Sunday – they were due to preach and share in three churches in the diocese and then hit the ground running as the conference opened at 9am on Monday.

This conference was specifically aimed at lay readers and their wives and the theme was Spirit-filled

discipleship. David said it was the biggest conference he had seen in many years, with 332 delegates present, representing 229 parishes, and he added that the delegates were heard singing as they travelled to the gathering.

Bishop Edward opened the conference and visited throughout the week, despite the fact he was

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'Keep praying, it's working!'

A TEAM of four convened from around the world for a working lunch, just hours before the SOMA UK mission began in Kinkiizi, Uganda.

The multicultural team had a complex brief from the diocese, requesting topics including discerning spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ, the rapidly growing churches and combating heresy.

Team leader Steve said: "My response was, certainly, that we would do our best but it would depend upon the skills and gifts of team members as to what was possible."

SOMA is well known and trusted by clergy and church leaders in Kinkiizi: a long-term relationship built up thanks to several one-week SOMA missions since 1998. "This mission was very different," said Steve. "It began with a two-day clergy conference, and then the team was split in two and travelled out to lead

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Exuberant worship at the conference in East Ruwenzori

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suffering from malaria and also mourning the recent death of his mother.

The first day of the conference, held in the cathedral, set the scene for the week. Teaching went well, worship was exuberant with lots of dancing, and there was a huge response to an invitation for laying on of hands for healing.

Day Two saw marriages ministered to and spiritual gifts received. The Archbishop of the Province of Uganda addressed the conference with his wife and spoke very warmly of SOMA; the Most Revd Stanley Ntagali was an evangelist in Karamoja, then a lay reader and a Soma team member, before his enthronement as

Archbishop in 2012.

The third day saw an extended ministry time, with deep interaction between team and delegates.

Team member Pete sensed God was knocking down walls and that increased spiritual warfare was being waged; there were tears of happiness in some sessions.

Creativity on the fourth day was "amazing", said David, with drama, prophetic and imaginative Bible readings, fun with balloons, interactive prayer and "prayer tunnels". The tunnels are a form of prayer ministry with a prophetic edge; people pass through whilst being prayed for and then join in praying for others or sharing a scripture, encouragement or prophetic word. The tunnel grows and enables all to participate.

That day's seminar, on spiritual and domestic abuse, proved important, deep and powerful.

The closing day focused on questions from delegates and teachings on topics including spiritual wells to be dug or rediscovered, and

the dangers of mixing African culture with Christianity, as well as encouragement and church unity. Bishop Edward closed the conference at lunchtime so delegates could travel home that afternoon.

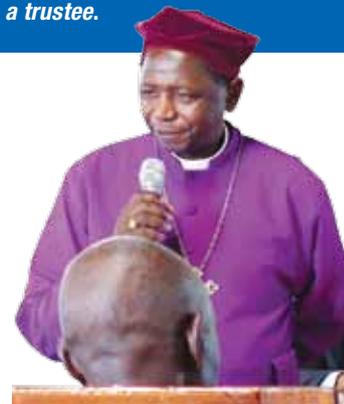
"There is a deep hunger for the truth and an overwhelming response to teaching"

For team members, Saturday provided time to catch their collective breath, reflect on an astonishing week and debrief. Additionally, there was the opportunity to celebrate the 21st birthday of team member Arran and to see more of Uganda, specifically wildlife in Kibale National Forest, before the long journey back to Entebbe for flights home the following day.

A particularly crucial element in SOMA's values is the ability to be flexible, to react to what God is doing "in the field". In East Ruwenzori, the team expected to stage two shorter conferences to cope with the impressive number of delegates; in fact, the delegates' hunger for more, with a need for deeper teaching and discussion, led the team and Bishop Edward to agree there would be far greater satisfaction for all if there was a single five-day conference.

Cueing both the team's personal and the SOMA intercessors into this change was achieved seamlessly,

Creativity and fun during the worship seminar in East Ruwenzori



Archbishop of Uganda Most Revd Stanley Ntagali

with team members Hannah and Yvonne feeding back information so that prayer could be focused on specifics as well as the overall direction of the conference.

Tuning in

"There is a deep hunger for the truth and an overwhelming response to teaching. Heartfelt worship and joyful dancing," they reported early on. "God has tuned you as intercessors into what is happening here."

And an intercessor fed back this: "The conference seems to be going well and the information you are supplying is so exciting and uplifting! Praise God."

Team: Leader Revd David McDougall, Hannah Akibo-Betts, Francis Fuller, Pete Harrison, Nathan Haynes, Arran McDougall, all from St Mary, Bletchley, UK; Yvonne Wiebe, Canada, resident in UK; Rev Blessing Shambare, Zimbabwe; Teresa Parish, Australia, resident in USA; Bishop Edward Arinaitwe Bamucwanira; intercessor coordinator Sue Smith, Cyprus.





‘Keep praying, it’s working!’

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two deanery days for the next three days. These were very effective indeed and focused on lay ministers – readers, evangelists, pastors, youth, Mothers’ Union.”

Most schools, the hospital and the training centre for craft and building skills are supported by the Church, as are initiatives for clean water and agriculture. The churches have more than one Sunday service, many are more than full.

Bishop Dan, enthusiastic about SOMA, wants all the churches to develop a full ministry with a dynamic balance of Word and Spirit. He asked the team to encourage teaching and ministry in the Holy Spirit, building on foundations laid during previous missions.

The two-day conference in Kanungu was attended by nearly 70 clergy, with keen interest and expectant faith from the outset; many received prayer ministry. Two talks had a major impact – ‘Are you well?’ and ‘Practical prophecy’. This second session saw about 85 per cent become aware of the Holy Spirit communicating with them in different ways.

At the end of the first day, team member Teresa communicated to intercessors by text/SMS: “We have so much to be thankful for and we acknowledge it is through the foundation of intercession and ongoing prayers. Team coming from different nations yet there was a Holy Spirit golden thread through each person’s teaching, linking all together. Prayer request for tomorrow – keep praying as you are because it’s working!”

However, text communication with UK intercessor coordinator Kate was frustrated at this stage, said Steve. “We didn’t realise that our messages were going out fine, but we weren’t receiving messages sent from the UK, yet Teresa was in touch with the US fine. We eventually worked out another route – out via Teresa and in via Silas.”

On Wednesday, the team began travelling to the deaneries, working in pairs – Silas with Steve and Teresa with Hudson. At Butogota, on the Congo border, 162 lay leaders attended.

Thursday saw the team in Rutenga, 5,500ft up in the mountains. Although only one deanery, it fielded a 100 per cent turnout with more than 90 delegates, from lay leaders through to the archdeacon. At the end, the whole church moved to the front and Silas and Steve prayed with everyone. Two people clearly displayed signs of spiritual oppression, crying out and writhing on the floor; both were released through prayer. The effect was profound and a holy stillness descended.

*“God is so gracious;
He just keeps on turning up
and doing something fresh
and new at each location”*

Kambuga, near Lake Edward, was the focus on Friday, with two deaneries well represented by lay and clergy. It was a longer day and half the delegates stayed on for prayer, bringing forth much weeping, and several people went out in the Spirit on the floor.

“God is so gracious; He just keeps on turning up and doing something fresh and new at each location,” said Steve.

The team met for supper that night and shared their similar yet different experiences. Teresa and Hudson had focused more on healing; Teresa spoke on women’s ministry in the church and ministered to the pain some women suffer because of the way they have been treated.

The week was framed by Sundays preaching in the cathedral and local churches.

The second Sunday saw 35 adults and children respond to the invitation to invite Jesus into their lives, when Steve and Silas prayed with individuals before the whole congregation stretched out their hands to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Struggle and difficulty

As a first-time team leader, Steve said: “I imagine that my experience of trying to get everything in place and the degree of struggle and difficulty is perfectly normal. I’m sure that the enemy who strives against us doesn’t want SOMA to even exist, let alone for teams to encourage, teach and minister in the power of the Spirit in far-flung places to further build God’s Kingdom in people.

“I am very pleased to report that everything ran very smoothly, both from a travel / logistics point of view and from the teaching and ministry aspect. We had an extended team time each evening with a review of the day, prayer and praise, and prep for the next day’s events. The fellowship was great.”

In letters to the team and to SOMA UK following the mission in April, Bishop Dan Zoreka wrote: “The topics you handled were relevant and represented the real issues and challenges affecting our church today. We cherish this partnership and pray that the good Lord will continue to use you mightily as you continue to spend your energy, yourself and your resources for the sake of the Gospel. May God bless you abundantly.”

“Please extend our appreciation to all SOMA supporters for their generous giving which made this mission possible. We pray for continued partnership.”

Team: Leader Revd Steve Holmes, UK; Teresa Parish, Australia, resident in USA; Hudson Davies, USA; Silas Juma, Kenya; Bishop Dan Zoreka; intercessor coordinator Kate Brankin.

Come on a mission!

PART of the ministry of SOMA is to help people step out in faith, a move to follow God’s call to leave their comfort-zone, beyond which they expect to cope using their own resources, and stretch faith.

We encourage you to consider whether God might be calling you to join a team; two weeks with SOMA will invariably change your life!

Sometimes people think: “I couldn’t cope”; “I’m no good at teaching or speaking to a group”; “I haven’t got that kind of faith”; “They wouldn’t want me”; “What have I got to share?”

Then there are practical matters: “It’s too expensive” and “What about the insects, the food, the loos?”

Everyone has questions, it’s natural. But remember, with God all things are possible: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

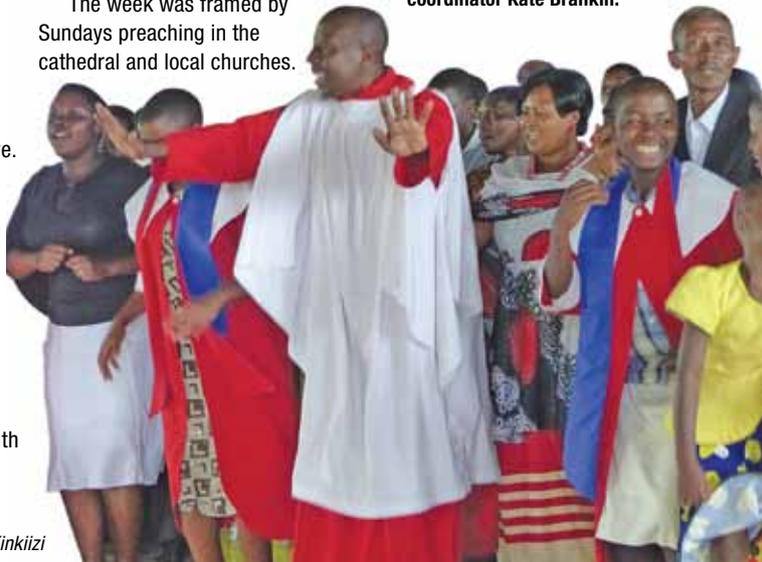
SOMA knows you have qualities, gifts and experience that Christians in other countries would value and benefit from. So, are you seeking to grow in faith and service, and do you relate well to other Christians? Would you share your testimony, pray for others, use and develop your gifts? Do you enjoy befriending people, listening to them and sharing with them?

Are you a team player with a sense of humour and a servant heart? Are you able to use your initiative, do you have the ability to persevere? Is reflection part of your life? Are you observant, sensitive, flexible and adaptable? Are you comfortable with the values and strategies of SOMA?

These gifts, skills and attitudes are not essential, because we are all very different. But it seems that people who have just some of these qualities are more gifted in building cross-cultural friendships and allowing real partnership to develop.

Above all else SOMA needs your heart, one full of love for God and his people; a heart longing to see to see the growth of His Kingdom at home and overseas. For mission abroad bears double the fruit because it enables you to bring growth to your home church and community too.

Adapted from the SOMA Team Manual by Judith Russell



Worship at Kinkiizi

A time of 'being, not doing'

Earlier this year I was granted a sabbatical: time-out to pray, think, reflect and be renewed, writes *SOMA National Director Stephen Dinsmore*.

I'd arranged my programme to facilitate this and, as I'd hoped, the Faith 2 Share retreat in Bangalore featured excellent talks that were both apposite and resonated with me; a good, focused start. The subsequent Missions Directors' Consultation proved, yet again, most worthwhile. I was greatly encouraged by the comment of one greatly respected mission leader that, particularly because of SOMA's emphasis on intercession, "SOMA is unique".

Next was my annual cell retreat in the English countryside. I've met with these theological college contemporaries most years since 1985. Spring had just sprung, so it was walking, reading and a really good start to carefully praying through my journals, which I continued until the sabbatical's end.

The two periods of retreat in Cyprus and Egypt went better than I could have asked or imagined. I'd chosen locations I knew, people who'd understand what I was about, and retreat house, church, cathedral and monastic communities focused on prayer and worship so I could immerse myself in the Presence, in adoration, reflection and contemplative prayer: in short "being, not doing", seeking His face rather than His hand.

Time in the monasteries of St Machairas, near Mount Olympus, Cyprus, and St Macarius in the desert at Scetis, Egypt, were particularly valuable. In both, I felt cradled and held in a bowl of their prayer and worship, and so enabled to reflect, listen, see, stand and pray in His Presence. St Macarius was the first

monastic community in Christendom, formed in Egypt at the beginning of the 4th Century. It was deeply moving to be in such places as these.

For SOMA, I was struck again by the clear prophetic founding Call to 'care for the nervous system of the body of Christ', a Call that has not been rescinded and still stands. I found myself profoundly reassured of the continuing veracity of our core values – to "do what we see the Father doing"; to be closely "yoked to Jesus Christ"; to proactively "keep in step with the Spirit". Finance is a disproportionate anxiety for those in the West, but the Lord strongly challenged me to hold fast to the SOMA "faith mission" approach to finances, that this is His desire for us and that SOMA will always have "just enough". We are called to walk by faith. Likewise, our foundation of prayer and intercession, upon which all our ministry stands and the value of cross-cultural, multicultural, mixed teams for mission was also confirmed.

Overall it was an excellent, encouraging, renewing and refreshing sabbatical. At times I felt almost overwhelmed by the pressed-down, overflowing riches of words, insights, pictures, scriptures, divine appointments, God-incidents and the palpable presence of the Spirit. What remains is a deep sense of thankfulness and thanksgiving to Him, "thank you, Jesus", alongside a profound sense of His gracious mercy, "Kyrie Eleison", and the lasting shalom of the Sabbath rest.

With every blessing,
Stephen



THANK YOU

Everyone at SOMA would like to say a huge thank-you to Elizabeth and Andrew Cooke who have been trustee and treasurer for over ten years.

Elizabeth's keen eye for detail, and commitment to understanding the charity, has been reflected in the accuracy of SOMA's record-keeping. Andrew and Elizabeth have always believed in SOMA's aims, whilst showing a great keenness to be involved.

SOMA really appreciates the time and energy you have invested: your giftings and qualities will be very greatly missed. We pray abundant blessings upon you.

Get involved

 **FUTURE MISSIONS** include:

North India	Orissa
DR Congo	Bukavu
South India	Tamil Nadu
Kenya	Thika
South Sudan	Youth leaders
Uganda	Bunyoro-Kitara
South India	Nandyal
DR Congo	Kalemie
Kenya	Nakuru



 **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!

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

 **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 are 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. SOMA is entirely dependent upon voluntary gifts. To resource SOMA's ministry go to our website: click on 'Get Involved' then 'Support Us'; or click on the 'Donate' button on the top right of any web page; or email steve.fincher@somauk.org



HELLO

Soma is very blessed to have appointed and welcomed Mr

Barry Hampson as a trustee in the summer. He will take over from Elizabeth at the end of October as treasurer. Barry is a fully qualified and experienced accountant and a member of ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales). He is also a member of the

Society of Professional Accountants. Barry and wife Jenny have three daughters and four grandsons. They worship at St Mary's, Bletchley and are also involved with the Anglican Chaplaincy in Northern France where they live for part of the year. We thank Barry for taking on this important role and his willingness to share his qualities and knowledge with us. We pray for blessings upon him as he goes on his SOMA journey.