

## 'A worldwide wave of prayer'

A NATION riven by tribal differences experienced a window of hope and opportunity when a SOMA team visited a refugee camp for South Sudanese.

South Sudan has 64 tribes, and the nightmare of war is evidenced in inter-tribal warfare bordering on genocide. The hopeful days of independence five years ago are a distant memory, and neighbouring Uganda now hosts upwards of a million refugees.

The Anglican church in Lui, South Sudan, has gone into exile. Bishop Stephen's original hope was for SOMA to visit Lui, but the need was to build up his people in exile, so the team went to the refugee camp in Kiryandongo, Uganda, 200 miles north of the capital, Kampala.

Team member Philip is no newcomer to Africa, but observed: "This was my first experience of being part of a SOMA team with all its challenges, joys, twists and turns.

"We were deeply conscious of being carried and directed by a worldwide wave of prayer. This was especially so at the beginning of our visit, as we discussed potentially difficult financial issues with the church leadership at Kiryandongo refugee camp (KRC). There was a good outcome and this set the pattern for our introduction to an extraordinarily strong refugee church, led by the Revd Capt Sostehen Lati Amin.

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*Dance of unity*



*Think on these things...*

*Come Holy Spirit*

# Incredible journey... in God's time

I N 1881, two Christian missionaries arrived in Andhra Pradesh. Arthur Inman and Alfred Briton were early travellers on an incredible journey.

Today, 136 years later, India has its first female bishop in the Church of South India, or CSI as it's known.

At the start, Arthur and Alfred lived in tents and travelled extensively in bullock-drawn carts, learning the local language as they preached the Gospel and built churches. Within three years, they established the SPG High School, which is still thriving today, and by 1905 had completed Holy Cross Church, which remains the cathedral church of the Diocese of Nandyal.

With the foundation of the CSI union, made up of Presbyterian, Reformed, Anglican and Methodist denominations, 1947 saw the inauguration ceremony in Madras Cathedral, a month after India achieved independence from the United Kingdom.

The CSI motto is "That they all may be one". Today the CSI is the

second largest church in India with a membership of more than four million.

While generally orthodox, the CSI is outward-looking with regard to ordination and social issues, and is concerned that "the Christian church and Christian mission to a large extent... has excluded the gender minorities from the church and its worship".

### Empowering women

However, in 2013 the CSI consecrated Revd Dr Eggoni Pushpalalitha as its first female bishop, certain that her appointment will empower women; the CSI already has more than 110 women priests.

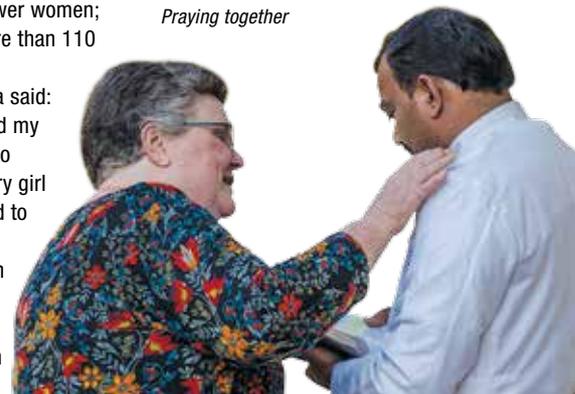
Bishop Pushpalalitha said: "I hail from a village and my parents sold their land to educate me. I want every girl from such a background to get the best education possible. Only education can change lives."

She has worked in several villages in south

India, and strives to improve the status of women in the church. "Be it any institution, women are always given second-rung treatment. We need to change that by promoting values that teach us to not to discriminate and treat all humans the same."

She is also determined to look into the educational, welfare, spiritual and cultural activities of the church. "As a priest, my primary responsibility was towards my congregation; as a bishop, the responsibilities are much more," she said. *Continued on page two*

*Praying together*



# Incredible journey... in God's time

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*Deep in discussion*

So where is SOMA now, on God's journey for India? How can SOMA fruitfully continue the work of Inman and Briton? So many questions and challenges arise, as they did in 1881, in a religiously and politically conflicted country.

## A challenging place

Despite the values and aims of CSI, India is an increasingly challenging place in which to be a Christian. Although the constitution guarantees religious minorities' rights, the reality ranges from political indifference, through oppression, discrimination, harassment, violence, persecution – even death. Bishop Pushpalalitha and SOMA are indeed experiencing many challenges.

Like those first missionaries, SOMA will continue to share love and faith by reaching out to those in need, sharing knowledge and helping to "care for the nervous system of the body of Christ" with and for God.



SOMA's essential need alongside prayer is to trust in God.

On the latest visit to India, the team witnessed first-hand the commitment of Indian priests and pastors to personal prayer and Bible study, serving their people as they face the discrimination and persecution that all Indian Christians encounter; they simply focus on their faith.

*"When God calls, he will provide the resources"*

It is vital that SOMA responds to God's call, even if the challenges of a mission seem initially daunting. A team member said: "When God calls, he will provide the resources. It was incredible how God brought team members together for a specific purpose at a particular time."

Another observed: "It is God who will give the growth."

SOMA's role is constantly fruitful, bringing growth and hope to others, never knowing when or if the journey will reach its end. The people of God's Kingdom are always learning, and God's rule and mercy are everlasting.

Those early missionaries did not foresee the future CSI and the furthering of opportunities for women, and Arthur and Alfred would be pleased at how much has been achieved. The journey of faith continues, although perhaps in a very different way to the original path.

**SOMA: Leader Revd Stephen Dinsmore, Fiona Smith, John Watson, Mike Quinlan, Jyoti Banerjee, Canon Martyn Crompton, all UK; Edwina Thomas, USA; intercession coordinator, Kate Brankin, UK.**

*Concentration*

# 'A worldwide wave of prayer'

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"We were also conscious that Bishop Stephen's invitation came at just the right time for the church. Team leader William received a picture from the Holy Spirit of our SOMA stream joining the main stream of the KRC church to strengthen and enhance it.

"Our first Sunday saw the dedication of a new church, St Paul's, built entirely by the local Christians. The three morning services in the parish church of Emmanuel gathered a community of 400 Anglicans firmly rooted in the liturgy and practices of the Anglican community and joyfully and wonderfully alive in the Spirit!"

## Death and destruction

However, alongside the joy were deeply sad stories of death and destruction in the homeland; tales of fractured families and illness, lack of food, education and resources. "Our challenge was to acknowledge our inability to meet these needs but to point the church to the ONE who is all-sufficient," said Philip. "It was quite a challenge for those of us who have spent a lifetime being parish-fixers."

The conference led 80 delegates of mixed age, male and female, various tribes, through Ephesians, interspersing the teaching with ministry in the Holy Spirit, including prayers for healing and filling with the Spirit.

Regular reports to intercessors and pictures posted on Facebook garnered concerted worldwide prayer and themes began to emerge, the strongest being reconciliation between tribal groupings. The great Ephesian vision of one Lord, one faith, one church, one baptism was summed up at the conference in "one tribe in Jesus!"

There were 13 tribes represented at the main service in Emmanuel on the last Sunday, when a Sunday school was commissioned with 50 children dressed in striking purple uniforms.

*"The dance was a sign that we can all dance together in Jesus, no matter what our race or tribe"*

On the last day of the conference, gifts of T-shirts were given to the participants, proclaiming 'Faith for Future, South Sudan!' The delegates broke into spontaneous celebration and, significantly for the start of reconciliation, the dance they chose was from the Dinka, the dominant tribe. "The dance was a sign that we can all dance together in Jesus, no matter what our race or tribe," said Philip.

"Just before the dance we had celebrated a very Anglican communion in tin-roofed Emmanuel church when a large storm struck and rain hammered on the roof. In a previous session William had talked and drawn Ezekiel 47, the river of God flowing out of the temple as a sign of God's blessing and invitation to swim in it. As the rain poured down, a large river flowed from the church onto the football pitch! As the Communion finished, so did the rain."

*Thank you SOMA*



# Acting all in good faith



As far as the East is from the West...



Future worship leaders?

Empowerment was another theme, with team members Kay and Heather gathering female delegates to learn of their struggles, their hopes and dreams. The teenagers are particularly frustrated by their stalled education and the mothers by their daily striving to feed and clothe their children in a situation where there is no work. There is constant worry about the family back in South Sudan.

At the conclusion of the conference, Archdeacon Fanuel challenged the delegates to be agents of peace, spreading out into South Sudan and turning swords into ploughshares.

**Team: Leader Revd William Mather, Revd Philip Ireson, Kay Hunter-Johnson UK; David & Heather Sharland, UK & Ireland based in Uganda; Ven Capt Fanuel Onzima, Uganda; intercessor coordinator Helen Foster.**



Drama presentation *Two Masters*

THE use of theatre to convey the deep, meaningful messages of Jesus and the Kingdom of God has made a lasting impact on Christians in Kampala.

The SOMA team which led two drama workshops at key venues in the capital of Uganda in March has subsequently learned that the congregations have been inspired to start planning dramatic presentations for Christmas.

St Francis' Chapel, Makerere University, and St Paul's Kiwuliriza to the east of the city centre studied, rehearsed and presented *Two Masters* and *No Longer Slaves*. Each workshop began with praise and worship to ensure all that followed was to God's glory, rather than a "performance" to an audience.

Team members Paul and Faith, professional Christian actors, used "ice-breaker" games at the beginning of each workshop to help the delegates interact and to get to know everyone's personalities and skills.

One delegate recalled: "Day One was made up of versatile drills and games that got our rhythm up as well as our brains thinking hard. We were exposed to ways of how we can pass on the message through various types of drama.

"First was a video clip of the Good Samaritan that we watched, an eye-opener to how we can get our drama into the modern-day church and times. Split into different groups, with the help of the SOMA team we were tasked to do various drama pieces. We had to do physical theatre, spoken word as well as various dialogues.

"Day Two involved us going through five steps of how we can prepare our minds and use our various

characters, personalities and actions to do drama."

The dramas were gradually refined for presentation to a wider audience. At St Paul's, this was at the end of the second day, when other churches were invited, along with children from the adjacent church school. The good number of people who came to support and encourage the participants were astonished that their skills had been so enhanced in only two days.

## Powerful impact

At St Francis, the group focused on presentations at each of the three main Sunday services, under the theme *More Than Conquerors*. The usual practice is to present a short drama immediately before the sermon, when they performed *Two Masters*, followed by *No Longer Slaves* at the end of the service. Both made a powerful impact.

Jesus widely used dramatic story to communicate with "unchurched" people: "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable." *Matthew 13:34 NIV*. He was a captivating storyteller but his stories

Team members Milly and Don



were not a warm-up for the "real" message; they were the message, and Jesus intended people to reflect on this.

Undoubtedly, people went home from these SOMA dramas with many thoughts dancing in their minds, hopefully continuing to rekindle the dramas and their messages.

Coordinator Ladan Natulinda was very encouraging: "With sincere gratitude we wish to extend our heartfelt joy to the SOMA UK for having come to St Paul's Kiwuliriza.

*"Through the training we were taught more versatile ways to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ through drama ministry"*

"As a youth ministry we were blessed and also acquired skills on how to better our drama as a ministry. Drama had been an integral part of our youth ministry but had been met with a few challenges. However, through the training we were able to rise up on our feet once again, having been taught more versatile ways of how we can be able to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ through drama ministry."

The workshops have inspired the participants to continue to develop their gifts, and St Paul's is planning to present a drama production in the future, perhaps with a return visit by Paul and Faith to lead more workshops.

**Team: Leader Revd Don Brewin, Faith and Paul Syrstad, all UK; Michael Asaba, DRC based in Uganda; Milly Mirembe, Uganda; intercessor coordinator, Sue Smith, Cyprus.**



Spectators

## Reaching out to 'those at the back'

**R**ENEWING worship was the subject of the 7th SOMA mission to a diocese in DR Congo.

Previous visits to Boga have embraced wide-ranging themes. Some "looked outwards", such as *Making God's Kingdom Visible*, to encourage demonstrating the witness of the Church in bringing peace and stability to a suffering nation; others, such as *Marriage and Family Life*, focused "inwards" on the pressures for people to set up strong Christian homes.

The theme of the March mission addressed a primary activity of the Church – worship – and the best way for clergy and choirs to lead this.

### Worship, not performance

The team encouraged the choirs to ensure that what they are doing is "worship" rather than "performance", as previous visits have seen teams, congregations and delegates sitting for an hour while three or four choirs sang with no congregation participation.

In tandem, those responsible for leading worship were challenged to reach out to those "at the back" to ensure all the congregation can hear what is being said and to make eye contact with those beyond the first few rows.

Team members on an earlier visit noticed that many people had no service book or song book so struggled to follow what was going on; most did not take Holy Communion. They were

not welcomed by the stewards as they arrived and, at the end of the service, they were out of the door before any clergy could meet them.

The team came equipped with a specially written resource, *Sharing in Worship*, with topics including *What is worship*, *Worship within the Anglican tradition*, *Planning and preparing worship*, *Leading and participating in worship* and *The Spirit helps us*, together with a Congolese Kiswahili workbook for each delegate. As usual, the speakers were free to build on these titles as the Holy Spirit directed and, during the final session, Evelyn felt the Lord was prompting the team to invite the delegates to come forward for anointing with oil and salt. This was a very powerful time, and lunch was delayed by an hour.

Each afternoon, the delegates divided into three groups. One, under the leadership of gospel singer and worship leader Tabitha, was for the choir leaders; the other two, led by Evelyn and Don, were for all worship leaders and provided important opportunities for questions and discussion.

The evening celebrations began with free worship, followed by a brief challenge from one of the team, accompanied by a testimony, leading into time for people to receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit in different ways.

### UK RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE 2018

Tuesday 22 – Thursday 24 May, at High Leigh, Herts.  
Details in the next edition of *Sharing*

## Get involved

**FUTURE MISSIONS** include:

Tanzania	Kibondo
DR Congo	Goma
South Sudan	Maridi
DR Congo	Lubumbashi
Kenya	Nakuru
Uganda	Kampala
South India	Nandyal
DR Congo	Kinshasa
South Sudan	Athooch
Kenya	Thika
DR Congo	Katanga
Uganda	Bunyoro-Kitara
Kenya	Nairobi
Zimbabwe	Harare

**PRAY:** It is upon Intercession and prayer that SOMA's ministry and mission is founded. Find each day's live prayer nugget on twitter, facebook and our website home page. Receive our *Daily Prayer Diary* with your copy of *Sharing*. SOMA Intercessors are informed by regular, extensive Prayer Briefings and two-way daily emails when teams are on mission. For more on intercession: on our website click on 'Prayer and Intercession'; or contact Kate Brankin at [intercession@somauk.org](mailto:intercession@somauk.org)

Team leader Don said: "It was so encouraging to see the delegates take every opportunity to be prayed for. This revealed a recognition of their own needs, and the fact that opportunities for clergy to be prayed for are few and far between."

*Services were well attended, yet demonstrated there are still many challenges*

During the days of these workshops, the team looked to demonstrate different ways in which the Holy Spirit could work, from delegates praying blessings on each other in threes, through inviting the Holy Spirit to release them as a group from events or feelings that hold them back, to coming forward to the rail for individual prayer.

On Sunday there was the opportunity to put into practice some

**TEAM:** Come on a mission! We welcome new team members. For an application to be considered for a SOMA Team, simply email SOMA at [info@somauk.org](mailto:info@somauk.org) or phone us on 01469 279737. Alternatively click on 'Join a Team' on our website [www.somauk.org](http://www.somauk.org)

**GIVE:** We rely totally on financial gifts. We are constantly in need of sponsorship for missions and overseas members of teams, as well as running the SOMA office. Your gift furthers this strategic work of the Holy Spirit. To resource SOMA's ministry, go to our website, click on the 'Donate' button on the homepage or click on 'Get Involved' then 'Support Us'; alternatively, email [steve.finch@somauk.org](mailto:steve.finch@somauk.org) or post direct to SOMA, PO Box 69, Merriott TA18 9AP

**INVITE:** To invite a SOMA team email [stephen.dinsmore@somauk.org](mailto:stephen.dinsmore@somauk.org)

**PARTNER:** A SOMA Parish Mission Partnership builds and maintains a live, active and mutually beneficial relationship between your congregations and SOMA, and so makes an effective resource for you, envisioning your church for Renewal & Mission both at home and abroad as well as fulfilling SOMA's worldwide call and ministry. Click on 'Get Involved' on our website, then 'Parish Mission Partners'. Alternatively email [stephen.dinsmore@somauk.org](mailto:stephen.dinsmore@somauk.org) or call 01460 279737

of the lessons learned in the week. Bishop William decided the whole group would take part in the three main Sunday services at Cité Church – the 7am service in Rutoro, the local language; the 8.30am French service; and the 10.30am Kiswahili service. Tabitha had rehearsed the joint choirs to lead the singing and Michael, Evelyn and Don were designated to preach. These services were well attended, yet demonstrated that there are still many challenges ahead.

Finally, congratulations to Don Brewin who, at the Sunday service, was honoured for his untiring ministry by being made an Honorary Canon of Boga Diocese.

**Team: Leader Revd Don Brewin, UK; Evelyn Lumbye, Uganda; Tabitha Odanga, Kenya; Michael Asaba, DRC but resident in Uganda; and with recently commissioned Church Army captains from Bunia Abigael Barozi and Vicky Kiseambo; intercessor coordinator, Sue Smith, Cyprus.**