

Mwanza, TANZANIA: Equipping Church Leaders

SOMA was asked by Bishop Kwanga to lead a conference for several clergy and one hundred lay evangelists in the Diocese of Mwanza, Tanzania. The cross-cultural SOMA team included a priest and lay leader from the US and two priests from



another African country, all serving together with varied ministry gifts, including language fluency and translation for all those attending. Bishop Kwanga was anxious to bring training to lay and clergy leaders to strengthen and equip them for ministry, with teachings on Servant Leadership, Christian Values vs. Tribal Values, the Person and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Evangelism, Spiritual Warfare, Authority in the Church, Listening to God and Discipleship. Critical to this SOMA mission was providing training for the many diocesan lay leaders assigned to lead and minister to a congregation under the authority of a priest, who is only able to visit once a month to celebrate Holy Communion.

The conference teachings were well received; in fact, the Bishop and several in attendance emphasized a strong desire

for more of this kind of training. One of the clergy in attendance commented, “I have [observed] changes in many church leaders especially the way they have learned to hear the voice of God, [time for] personal scripture reading and prayers, forgiveness and obedience.” Many embraced the interactive kind of training, allowing individual attendees to participate and practice spiritual disciplines.

The SOMA team sensed a strong desire among participants to receive what the Lord had for them: “We appreciated their receptive hearts and eagerness to grow in God.” And, as with most SOMA missions, team members felt the Lord’s presence in tangible ways, as they yielded to the Spirit’s leading throughout the training time. “At one point during our conference in Tanzania, the rain fell very heavily for an hour—not only knocking out the power to our speaker system but also falling so hard on the metal roof that we couldn’t hear a thing. Rather than going on with our program as planned, we decided to have an impromptu prayer meeting instead, and it was one of the most blessed times of the week... The Lord powerfully moved through the team and we were blessed with many words of knowledge and inspired teachings and saw physical healings as well.”

Bishop Kwangu of Mwanza was greatly encouraged with the success of this mission. “Thanks very much for the SOMA mission team that came to minister. It was really a very blessed time and especially for all the lay evangelists as well as the clergy who attended the sessions. Their only plea is that we plan for such sessions next year as well.” We look to the Lord for His provision and guidance for future missions here.



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Dateline: Marsabit, KENYA

Our SOMA team of two African and two US missionaries flew into Marsabit from Nairobi on a single engine Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) bush plane. As is often the case, our plane landed at a number of small villages along the way, giving transportation support to all Christians in this area. As we looked around at the parched semi-desert region, we were confronted with the reality of immense suffering that our missionary hosts had told us about. Helpless to do anything apart from God's grace, we prayed for the Lord to send much-needed rain to this region.

After more than 30 hours of travel, we finally arrived at the Christian diocesan compound in Marsabit. It was a welcome sight! Each day, the strangely eerie sound of the Muslim call to prayer emanating from one of the eight mosques in the city awakened us at 4 a.m. and again at 5 a.m. We were in a different world, indeed...

The journal entry above is the backdrop for SOMA's mission to lead a clergy-spouse conference in Marsabit. This was the first request from Bishop Qampicha Daniel Wario for a SOMA-led conference and the first designed for both clergy and spouses. The Bishop wanted to offer an opportunity for husbands and wives to strengthen their marital bonds. He also saw a pressing need to build a stronger relationship among members of the clergy, many of whom did not know each other, and between the clergy and the diocese itself.

Clergy couples face some unusual stresses, not the least of which is the conflict facing Christians with the forces of Islam, animism and other African traditional religions. The SOMA team arranged a time for participants to discuss ways to address tribal traditions from a Christian perspective. The remoteness of the villages offers another challenge, because many clergy have to travel up to 150 kilometers between villages where their congregations are located. It is not unusual for clergy spouses to work in Nairobi as teachers, some seven hours away from home. Often husbands and wives live apart out of necessity and only see each other once every few months, adding stress on marriages and families.

As the conference began, we noticed some initial tension between husbands and wives. However, Bishop Daniel was quick to direct the couples to sit with one another. Many participants admitted that this was the first time they had talked with their spouses about ministry-related issues and the difficulty of balancing married life with ministry responsibilities. For some spouses, this also represented the first time they had prayed together or were made to feel a part of the ministry team. The SOMA team members were able to offer practical methods for incorporating daily prayer into their family lives and to encourage the participants to work through other difficult issues common for couples who live apart. One priest commented, "My spouse and I have learned things that will change our marriage *and* our ministry."

With the family unit under attack in every society, we praise God for using this SOMA team to bring understanding and healing through the work of the Holy Spirit to these, His beloved children laboring under such difficult circumstances. As one priest said, "We have been empowered and given practical tools that will help us in teaching devotions at home to help our families grow as Christians." There is no doubt that it will have a ripple effect on their congregations. In the closing service, the clergy and spouses renewed their marriage vows and rededicated themselves to ministry. According to Bishop Daniel, "The SOMA mission has helped my diocese become a family!" To God be the glory!

Team: Dr. Glen Petta, TL, SOMA USA; Rev. Philip Kilungu, Diocese of Makueni, Kenya; Rev Faith Mbithi, Diocese of Makueni, Kenya; Rev. Fred Hotz, Saint Timothy Church, Fort Worth, TX.



Mandalay, MYANMAR: “Hearts of Worship”

By Kristi Heffron

Participating in worship in another country—in an unfamiliar language, with people of a different culture—is often described by SOMA team members as a very powerful experience. The “powerful experience” comes from being moved by the Holy Spirit and strongly feeling the presence of God, like a foretaste of heaven. The SOMA team experienced this on a recent mission to Myanmar for a conference on prayer and worship. But what truly inspired us was the effect the worship had on the conference. The tangible power of God that came through our worship was the theme of each of the post-mission reflections by team members.

This was certainly true for me. After completing our last session of the conference, we began the car ride back to the hotel exhausted and at peace—praising God for all He had allowed us to see. We learned on the car ride home, however, that the plans had changed, and we would be leading another healing service the next evening. I became overwhelmed when I heard this new plan. My fleshly thoughts immediately consumed me. *Would I have the energy and the*



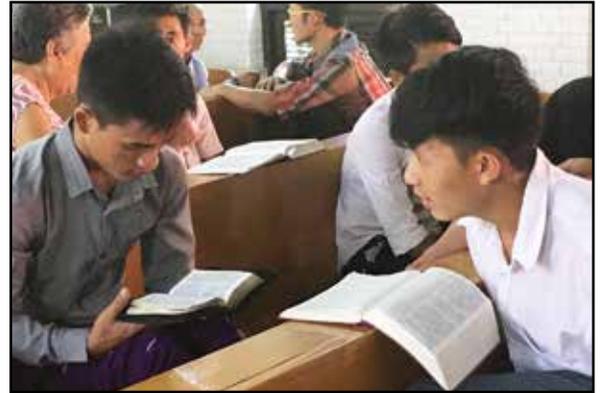
stamina to do it all again the next day? Reminded by the team of our prayer that we did not want to leave without accomplishing all that God had for us, I pushed aside my fleshly thoughts and began praying for those who may come seeking healing.

I was still concerned about my energy levels when the next evening’s worship service began. And then it happened. God spoke so clearly to me as we began to praise Him in song and prayer. He spoke to my heart, “My power comes when you glorify Me.” I entered into worship and was very aware of His presence in the ministry that followed.

Team members described their awe of God’s love and power: “I could sense the hunger and thirst among attendees for the word of God, and it was their *heart of worship* that ushered in the sweet presence of the Lord. I was touched during the worship hymns, though I could not understand what they were singing in Burmese.” Directly following the service, team members reported that many were blessed as they sensed God’s presence and witnessed several healings. “As the music began in the sanctuary, the Holy Spirit

“I could sense the hunger and thirst among attendees for the word of God...”

transcended the language barrier. Our spirits were lifted to join in worshipping the Lord! God’s presence was tangibly powerful.”



This conference in Mandalay demonstrated the direct and powerful connection between corporate worship and effective ministry. Our team was greatly blessed to experience the fruit of worshipping together with our sisters and brothers in Myanmar.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER by Dr. Glen Petta

"In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly." Psalm 5:3

I recently returned from two missions—a pastors conference in one diocese and a conference for pastors and spouses in another. Almost everywhere I visit, I note the lack of a disciplined devotional life in these men who are shepherds of their flock, made more challenging given their frequent travel to serve remote churches and the many other demands of ministry. It reminds me that each of us has to be intentional to make time to spend with God, in order to receive His guidance and wisdom for the day. In one of the conferences, we had the pastors participate in an exercise of spending an hour in solitude to listen to the Holy Spirit. Many said they had never taken this much time to just listen to the Lord. The results were an amazing realization for some—God desires to speak to us when we take the time to listen. How often do we make time to listen to God?

During each SOMA mission, the team begins the day with a special time for prayer and listening in order to know what the Holy Spirit wants to affirm or change in the plan for ministry. The team is only concerned with hearing guidance from the Holy Spirit for that day. This should be a spiritual routine for all of us, and I often fall short when I return. These spiritual disciplines serve to focus our minds according to the Spirit of God. They are His means of preparing the soil of our hearts, of sowing to the Spirit, and of setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. Without these disciplines, we sow to the flesh and reap of the flesh.

I find I must continue to ask Jesus into my daily schedule and routine, stopping throughout my day to listen to Him. As I reminded these pastors, in the same way we are hesitant to break scheduled appointments with others, each of us must be mindful not to break appointed times with Jesus. I hope you will join me in spending time each day to listen to Him.

