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EXTENDING GOD'S KINGDOM IN TANZANIA Renewed by the Holy Spirit



SOMA brought spiritual refreshment through conferences for clergy, their wives, and catechists in two dioceses in Tanzania in August of 2014. The conference in the Diocese of Mpwapwa was planned originally for priests, but the Bishop revised the plan to include clergy wives, with a gathering of over 260 people. The team led sessions for clergy and their spouses on balancing family life and ministry demands, discipleship, and seeking forgiveness for inner healing. Special sessions provided time for couples to talk and pray together, a valuable exercise leading to rededication of their marriages and commitment to each other. The Rev. Alex Leighton shared that he was overwhelmed by the steady stream of priests and wives coming forward for prayer, including one clergy wife who prayed to receive Christ.

Priests learned the importance of rest and renewal to be fully effective in their ministry as well as in their family lives. "My failure to make time for rest had resulted in discord with my wife," explained one priest. Only as he was renewed and refreshed during the retreat by the presence of the Holy Spirit did he realize that prayer and time away from daily responsibilities are vital for effective ministry.

Through the conference in the Mission Diocese of Kondoa, attendees were greatly encouraged by the SOMA missionaries, where the work of spreading the Gospel can be discouraging and even dangerous in this area that is 95% Muslim. Francine Thomas explained, "Many are bound by ancient destructive cultural and religious practices that perpetuate the subjugation of women, children, and even other men. We are always extraordinarily grateful to witness

true transformation take place as God's people fully grasp the truth that Christ comes to bring freedom from bondage and hope for the hopeless."

"The strain of working in this area, where many have never heard the name of Jesus, and tribal factions still war against each other with bows and poison arrows, was evident on so many faces," added Dan Thomas. "However, as the Holy Spirit spoke love, healing, and comfort to these faithful servants of God, we saw a visible change take place. A new light came into their eyes and smiles spread across their faces. We could sense a squaring of shoulders and a new determination to be about their Father's business."

Team members noted the benefit of cross-cultural ministry, how they were knit together and served the Lord as one unified team, despite their different backgrounds. "Going on mission outside one's home area brings further benefits, particularly for clergy participating on a SOMA mission. When you have a cross cultural experience, you are able to apply the Gospel in another way," Canon Francis Matue shared. "You find other ways of speaking to people whom you are not born with, and that helps to sharpen the mind of the priests and their skills in presenting the Gospel."

Team List: Dr. Glen Petta, TL; Rev. Canon Francis Matue, Diocese of Makueni, Kenya; Rev. Alex Leighton, All Saints', Woodbridge, VA; Dan and Francine Thomas, Christ Community Church, West End, NC; Kyle Spradley, St. Peter & St. Paul, Fort Worth, TX; Libby Manning, Christ The Redeemer, Fort Worth, TX.

UGANDA: Bishops and Wives Strengthened for Ministry

“Thank you for obeying God to come”



In July, SOMA USA participated on a multinational SOMA team to lead a retreat for Ugandan bishops and their wives, following up on an earlier SOMA retreat in January. The SOMA missionaries who gathered to minister at the Uganda House of Bishops’ and Wives’ Retreat travelled considerable distances to Kampala to build the team and pray together before embarking on such ministry. The Holy Spirit was powerfully evident in creating a unified team of culturally diverse backgrounds.

The team aimed to lead the retreat in such a way as to enable the delegates to soften their hearts, unbind their wounds and open themselves, with their spouses, to the Holy Spirit, and to do so in the presence of their colleagues. In the context of worship, prayer and fellowship, the delegates held themselves in a state of open repentance throughout the retreat. In addition, the wives met and prayed together and developed relationships with one another, with the Archbishop’s wife taking a welcoming lead.



Three days sounds barely adequate for bishops and their wives, with the responsibilities of an entire diocese resting on their shoulders, to rest, relax and open themselves to the Holy Spirit, their spouses and one another. “But the concern that 72 hours would prove insufficient proved quite unfounded,” shared one team member.

Relationships were healed and restored among the bishops throughout the conference – so much so that, toward the end of the retreat in a moving moment, the bishops reaffirmed their episcopal ordination vows and, of great spiritual significance, their vow of allegiance to the Archbishop. One team member summed up the impact of the mission: “We ended a wonderful few days by breaking legacies and histories of the past, with all the bishops, their wives as witnesses, rededicating themselves to their calling. Inspired by a charge from Archbishop Kwashi, all the bishops openly submitted to the leadership of Archbishop Stanley and his leadership for the Province of Uganda. Alleluia!”



Team List: Archbishop Ben Kwashi, SOMA International Chair, Nigeria, TL; Mrs. Gloria Kwashi, Jos, Nigeria; Stephen Dinsmore, SOMA UK National Director; Dr. Glen Petta, SOMA USA National Director; Janina Walker, Christ The Redeemer, Fort Worth, TX; Archbishop Stanley Ntagali, Uganda.



MYANMAR: Fields White For Harvest

SOMA's initial mission to the Anglican Province of Myanmar in 2013 laid the foundation for following up with four specific missions during October and November of 2014. SOMA's presence in Myanmar in 2013 represented the first occasion that foreign missionaries were allowed into the country following years of closed borders and civil war. With an emerging openness to the outside and a more democratic political system, Myanmar presents enormous opportunity for mission in this part of the world, where over 90% of the people are Buddhist. Archbishop Stephen Than had earlier expressed a vision that the Church would experience a revival like that of African countries in recent years.

The breadth and scope of the SOMA-led conferences and training were daunting given the time available and the variety of venues and attendees to be addressed. The SOMA team led teachings in the School for Catechists in Yangon; spent most of a day in sessions with seminarians at Holy Cross Seminary; traveled to the Diocese of Mandalay to train sixty-five clergy and catechists; and held training sessions in the Diocese of Sitwe for catechists and local Baptist Bible students and professors. Toward the end of the mission in Sitwe, the SOMA team arranged for a healing service that was opened to the wider community, where attendees practiced praying for others. The team and its intercessors placed their confident trust in the Holy Spirit to guide and direct the agenda for teachings, timetables and results. And God's grace was powerfully evident in bringing reconciliation and unity among church leaders who had earlier been in conflict within the Diocese.

The following is a first-hand account from one team member, with personal reflections on the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance for the team.



Gentle Presence of the Holy Spirit

by Dr. Lyle Schrag

During the SOMA mission to Myanmar, I was able to experience a rich partnership in ministry with two dear brothers, Dr. Glen Petta and Father Ian Montgomery. For several weeks we had fellowship with the clergy, catechists, and evangelists of both the Diocese of Yangon and the Diocese of Mandalay, providing training in leadership development as well as Spirit-filled ministry. In many ways, it was more than a matter of teaching. It was a shared ministry where we, as the SOMA team, were blessed by the Burmese servants with learning and discovery as well. Their affection and eagerness were contagious. All three of us were inspired to teach and share deeply, relying on the ministry of the Spirit of God within and through us.

I must confess that I needed to experience this mission. Even though our agenda for daily teaching was constantly changing, the primary emphasis was focused on the Holy Spirit. From almost forty years of pastoral ministry and teaching pastoral theology in a seminary setting, I have found myself standing in the middle of extremes when it comes to the Holy Spirit. On one side, there are those who question how the Holy Spirit is to be experienced beyond the New Testament, and shiver at the thought of what is often seen on the other side of the spectrum, where it seems that the voice of the Holy Spirit can only be expressed in wild and extravagant ways. Like many, I find myself seeking to sustain a balance. Our ministry together in Myanmar served to strengthen that balance, allowing God to touch our hearts with gentle power.

One of the most profound memories of the mission came in Mandalay when we went beyond teaching about the healing power of the Holy Spirit to actually leading several services of healing. As we invited the Burmese leaders to share in that ministry with us, to pray for each other and others, I sensed what I thought was a solemn spirit. The services were quiet and holy. Hands were gently laid on those seeking healing, and tears accompanied the prayers. It was only later, as they reflected on the experience, that the Burmese leaders shared about the impact. What I had seen at first as a solemn spirit was, in fact, some degree of fear. They had expected spiritual healing to include noise, shouting and falling. Instead, they discovered holiness and healing and the gentle touch of a Shepherd. With that, God blessed them ... and blessed me as well. And, by some heavenly economic principle, as God blessed us we were able to bless others in even greater ways.

Team List: Dr. Glen Petta, TL; Rev. Ian Montgomery, Chester, VT; Rev. Joshep Yin Oo, Diocese of Yangon; Dr. Lyle Schrag, St. Brendan's, Bellingham, WA.

MYANMAR: Mission Moments



Transformed From Martha...To Mary!

by Libby Manning

As many of us are, I am in my comfort zone when I am a Martha. Ask me to landscape the front of a school, organize people to turn around a Sports Booster Club, or beg people for money to pay for worthy school board candidates, I am usually pretty successful. But to ask me to rely on God's grace and assurance to deliver HIS message to a group of clergy, that's a totally different matter. That requires a Mary heart.

Initially when I arrived in Africa, I struggled with my relevance with these beautiful Christian leaders we were there to serve. Their everyday lives are met with serious challenges such as feeding their families, having sound options to educate their children and overcoming deeply held tribal superstitions throughout their communities. The majority of them live in rural, third world communities. And most of their congregations are in desperate situations. I saw many faces devoid of any hope or belief that they were children loved by God. Most of the ministers serving these communities have very little opportunity for spiritual training and study provided through the church.

My sinking state began to change as our team bonded and we opened up further to God's amazing grace with each presentation to the ministers. These ministers are truly God's front line foot soldiers. A SOMA mission is pulling God's faithful servants off the front line and bringing them to a place of love and feeding mentally and spiritually.

The sweetness of the Holy Spirit helped me to see our mission more through Mary's eyes than Martha's. I now understand that no matter how weak or strong my message was during our mission, just being there in person, holding a hand or touching a shoulder while someone came forward to pray was the most powerful aspect of my mission. I have come to realize that going on a SOMA mission is like plowing a field and having the faith that God is going to bring in the harvest.



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TANZANIA: Mission Moments



KENYA: God Comforts Us In Order To Comfort Others

SOMA was recently invited by Bishop Isaac Ng'ang'a to the Diocese of Mount Kenya Central. The bishop requested that a team come to encourage unity and bring teaching on discipleship in order to strengthen the diocese before his upcoming retirement. With his Diocese heading toward a transition in leadership, there was potential for divided loyalties and discord.

During the mission, the Kenyan priests were greatly encouraged through the personal testimonies and teaching by the SOMA team members, as they realized that the struggles and challenges they were facing were not much different than their own and that God's presence would be with them despite what they were going through. The Holy Spirit offered tangible evidence that he "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Over the following days, the clergy were blessed as the Holy Spirit provided for each concern: the fear of retirement from ministry was met with hope of the possibility of older clergy serving as chaplains and mentors to the younger clergy, fears of financial stresses were addressed by those who would assist in strategic financial planning and mentoring, and the burdens of family and personal concerns would be shared by those who would serve as coaches and accountability partners.

One team member reflected, "I was acutely aware of my insufficiency, as the clergy expressed their burdens and brokenness. As a result of God's work, they now have hope where it didn't exist before, and fellowship where relationships were previously broken. They were reminded of the fact that God is for them and has not forgotten them. He is present, and He is just as kind as they had believed, even if they had forgotten it for a time."

Team List: Rev. Ian Montgomery, Chester, VT, TL; Rev. Brook Batchelor, All Souls', Jacksonville, FL; Rev. Sospeter Mbogo, Anglican Church of Kenya; Rev. Canon Rosemary Mbogo, Anglican Church of Kenya.





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DIRECTOR'S CORNER by *Dr. Glen Petta*

SOMA is excited to offer the SOMA USA Clergy Retreat titled “Passion to Lead Courageously,” planned for July 28-31, 2015, in Kansas City, MO – the fruit of over two years of prayer and planning. Pastors and clergy from around the United States will gather for a time of personal renewal, encouragement and inspired teaching from two dynamic Christian leaders. Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi of Nigeria, SOMA’s International Director, and Bishop Rennis Ponniah of Singapore will bring passion for evangelism and a zeal for mission in the face of severe persecution and hostility to Christians.



The three-day retreat is designed to offer opportunity for attendees to step aside from the day-to-day responsibilities, to be better equipped for effective ministry, and receive inner healing from past wounds or failures. Clergy and pastors will be refreshed to return to their pastorates empowered and strengthened to carry out the Lord’s work in the face of challenges from growing secularism, materialism, and outright hostility to Christianity.



Please pray with us that church leaders in the United States will be renewed and unified for ministry as a result of the witness and experience of these global leaders. As in the past, SOMA is committed to strengthening clergy in our own country with Mission to the USA.

