

Sharing of Encouragement

by Mr. Greg Michael

"We had a great time on the mission. Paul, Amos, Greg and I laughed and prayed our way across Uganda. The Lord certainly knew what he was doing when he put us together. Bishop Salimo is a wonderful man of God. What challenges he faces in a very poor and very rural area, but he is building the church with the help of wonderful people and the blessing of the Holy Spirit. There was a palpable feeling of challenge and empowerment when we left." The Rev. Rand Reasoner

There are so many things to share about this short-term mission that none on their own or even put together could convey the depth of our experience.

The brothers on our mission team, the Rev. Amos Wandera from Kenya and Mr. Paul Wasswa Ssembiro from Uganda, greeted each morning at 4:00 a.m. with very vocal prayer sessions. Each phrase offered by Brother Amos was answered by "Praise Almighty Jesus" or "Praise His Holy Name" by Brother Paul. These prayers echoed in the dark of our little hut as Fr. Rand and I from Prince of Peace, Woodland Hills, CA, listened beneath the mosquito netting, adding our own intercessions. After about an hour both faithful African brothers fell back asleep until it was time to get about the business of the day.

Of the 210,000 people living in rural Sebei Diocese, 70,000 are Anglicans. The area is poor in material goods, but rich in faith, hope, and love. As a team, we were responsible for presenting a four-day conference on the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the climax of the conference occurred when Fr. Rand spoke to the laity about their responsibility in supporting the clergy in prayer. Responding to this prophetic message, the laity stretched out their hands toward the clergy and soaked them in prayer. When Bishop Salimo offered a public confession of his sins, there was a tremendous release of God's power. Nearly a quarter of the 300 leaders came forward, publicly confessing their sins, offering prayers of repentance and renewing their commitment to God. Our closing extended into three hours of very intense intercession.

Personally, I felt as if this SOMA conference were one big family reunion. We were literally loved and loved and loved. Despite having no prior acquaintance with the folks we met, we were taken into their embrace and treated as family. We shared wonderful stories, laughed, wept and prayed together. A great revelation to me was that no matter where you go, be it across the room or around the world, as God's children, we are bound together by our family resemblance, welcoming hearts and open arms - shared in the breaking of bread and the cup of wine. ■

"Sebei Diocese will never be the same again. The priests and the laity are on fire for God. We believe that those who caught the fire of God's Spirit are going to spread it around."

Mr. Paul Ssembiro



Team list: Greg Michael, Paul Ssembiro, Rand Reasoner, Amos Wandera.

Repentance Leads to Healing

by Stephne Bowers

Six anticipating hearts arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, from the US on March 30. As I inhaled the first fresh breath of the warm, African earth, I was calmed and felt the familiar space hug my tired flesh! [Stephne was born and grew up in South Africa as the daughter of missionaries. She now lives in Ohio with her husband and two children who were adopted from Siberia – a family from three continents.]

The 10-day conference sponsored by Vanguard Ministries led by the Rev. Elizabeth “Utugi” Kamau was a very intense experience. Fourteen countries were represented. Our worship prior to each teaching was a very intimate and meaningful time with the Lord – of joining hearts, bridging nations, and even continents – placing the King of Kings at the center of our lives and countries. Powerful!

The host team fasted for 30 days prior to and during the conference and until every person returned home safely. This act of personal sacrifice ministered to us all in a powerful atmosphere of the Lord’s presence; it was humbling, oh, so humbling, and when Utugi responded to the Lord’s prompting to wash and anoint each participant’s feet, overpowering feelings of the Lord’s love left me weeping at the frailty of my own existence.



An American receives a prophetic word from the Kenyan team.

One of the Vanguard team members said to me, “I have recognized within you a deep sadness that you may not even recognize or talk about, but I believe that it has to do with pain inflicted upon yourself and your nation, South Africa. Whatever pain and rejection your parents, family and friends have experienced in RSA (she does not know) has had a powerful and compassionate affect on you – you have internalized their pain and carried much of it for and with them. Therefore, as a black African, I ask you to stand on behalf of white South Africa and forgive us for all the pain, affliction, devastation, crime, bloodshed, fear, anger, violence and hatred we have caused you and your people. We need white South Africa to forgive black Africa for the racism and anger.”

I reciprocated with release and forgiveness, continued with confession of sin on behalf of white South Africa towards black South Africa and we both held on to one another until our faces were washed in tears. Marvelous relief and a new-found freedom in the Lord came upon us both and we parted exhausted, but with hearts overflowing with the Lord’s goodness and grace!

So, it was one humbling experience after another for me – a time of personal deliverance, encouragement and an overwhelming awareness of taking seriously what the Lord has for me in fulfilling His purpose and plan through my life. ■

I am nothing - He is ALL!

Team list: Mrs. Carolynne Rine, team leader, Truro, Fairfax, VA; Mrs. Stephne Bowers, Waterville Fallen Timbers Community Church, Waterville, OH; Mrs. Judy Cover, Mrs. Jean McCleerey, All Saints’, Woodbridge, VA; Ms. Storm Harvey-Friere, St. James Anglican Church, Newport Beach, CA; Mrs. Nannette Ward, St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, Toledo, OH.

The Holy Spirit: Alive and Active in the Dominican Republic

by Mrs. Pat Vazquez and Mrs. Holly Garrett



Our mission to conduct a youth retreat in January was perfect in all its imperfections. Our host, Carolina Roberts, the remarkable 21-year-old Diocesan Youth Pastor, and the young men and women (ranging in ages from 13-33) were thoroughly enjoyable—fun, respectful, and gracious. Our program was well received, and by the end of the retreat the 80-some participants had personally experienced our goal—finding the Holy Spirit in their lives. Even the obstacles provided the opportunity for miracles.

**The Holy Spirit
poured out
rain from heaven.**

Having had lots of experience with youth retreat weekends in the U.S., we all knew that it would take some “warm-up time” to get the youth into the spirit of the retreat—WRONG. They were so hungry for worship and spiritual teaching that the first song had them singing at the top of their voices and dancing in the aisles—and boy, do they know how to worship! And pray! I have never experienced such faithful, passionate and heartfelt prayers among young people as those offered during our “short” 45-minute prayer time before the evening activities. I couldn’t understand the language, but the faith and supplication came out loud and clear. (continued on page 5)

A Gathering of Very Special Women: Ugandan Bishops' Wives

By Mrs. Edwina Thomas

Why gather bishops' wives for a meeting, a conference? Why not all women, or women leaders, or priests' wives? In February, a small SOMA team joined "Mama" Phoebe Orombi, wife of Archbishop Henry Orombi, for a week in just such a gathering.

What we learned about the stresses of being a bishop's wife in Africa was staggering. One of the women had endured having her husband and two sons kidnapped by rebels, her house completely looted, including all clothes and household goods.

Several of the women had serious medical issues and little knowledge or resources to help them deal with the burdens of diabetes (only veterinary insulin is available), hypertension, or increasing blindness. One of our team members, Dr. Maria Akrofi, wife of the Primate of West Africa, stepped up to the challenge and began simple education for these women.

These wives did not "apply" for the position in which they find themselves: their husbands were chosen and consecrated as bishops. As the diocesan "Mama," she automatically becomes the leader of all women's ministry in the diocese, is expected to have a 24/7 open door to Christians in need, and, along with that, the resources to meet the need. Most of the women supplement their husband's meager salary through small businesses or agricultural projects. It is safe to say

that all are mothers to significantly extended families under their roofs.

During our conference Shelia Todd who was accompanied by Nara Duncan led us in worship. Jennifer Leber led a Bible Study each morning. Edwina taught a track about the Holy Spirit in four or five sessions. Mrs. Lubega addressed issues of self-awareness and confidence and Mr. Sam Ewou devoted an entire day to intercession.

Nara, wife of a bishop and team member from Pittsburgh, clearly demonstrated through concrete illustration that the struggles of this "position" were not unique to them. She shared her childhood battle of being born with a cleft palate and of almost losing an

only child who was run over by a van. Nara writes, "And they understood. And there were no longer any strangers in that room and there were no more Africans, or Americans – there were just a gaggle of women all making the best life out of what they were handed and raising their families and sharing their stories, and it was good."

Pray with me for each of these women and, indeed, every bishop's wife everywhere. Pray that, like the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, each one will grow to the fullness of one "who fears the Lord" and will receive all of the blessings that brings. ■



Bishops' wives with SOMA worship team.

Building Community in Honduras

By the Rev. Dr. Robert Sanders

It was only when Bishop Lloyd Allen met our four-person team on our arrival in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in early April that we were able fully to plan our mission. The Bishop wanted his twenty-seven clergy, an equal number of lay leaders of congregations (all seminary graduates), and some diocesan staff members to be empowered by the Holy Spirit at a three-day retreat. We, and the intercessors supporting us, had been praying that God would open the door for renewal, and He did!

Once at the retreat site, the Holy Spirit enabled us to teach and minister with great anointing. During our brief time together many people were blessed and there was healing, especially of emotional wounds. We were greatly encouraged that the Hondurans came to us for individual prayer and wanted to help the diocese in being ever more open to the Holy Spirit. Each team member's talk was followed by a spiritual exercise. Small group sharing among clergy and laity and the resulting prayer

was a new experience for the Hondurans and was reported to be a real highlight. Even the bishop chose to participate in a small group.



Small group prayer ministry.

The team was awed to observe that after the final talk, the Hondurans broke up into their groups to (continued on page 5)

Mission to the USA

Preaching and Living the Uncompromised Gospel

by Mr. John Nazaretian

The bishops' visit to All Saints, West Newbury, MA, was both a blessing and an exhortation. They blessed us with their very presence and their assurance that we are part of a worldwide community of faithful believers. They humbled us with their strength in the midst of continuing persecution and their solidarity with us in prayer.

The messages Archbishop Joseph and Bishop Edmund gave were powerful and straightforward. They exhorted us to holy living, obedience, perseverance in the face of adversity, and to committed lives of prayer and fasting. Their words were all the more powerful because they were, simply, the uncompromised Gospel. We felt an immediate bond with them as brothers in Christ because of their genuineness, friendliness, and humor.

Both men brought us a portrait of the vibrant Nigerian church and its fierce commitment to the Gospel. Bishop Edmund astounded us all with his account of the time last year when he and his family faced death at the hands of a Muslim mob but were delivered by God in a miraculous way. Reports of

the dangerous situations he faces humbled us who do not face such physical threats.

They presented us with a challenge to stand strong and to remember that Christ is the Victor! We are grateful for the encouragement during these uncertain times in our church. ■



Archbishop Akinfenwa



Bishop Akanya

In February, the Most Rev. Joseph Akinfenwa, Archbishop of the Province of Ibadan and Bishop of Ibadan and the Rt. Rev. Edmund Akanya, Bishop of the Missionary Diocese of Kebbi, visited the Dioceses of South Carolina, Tennessee and Massachusetts as part of SOMA's "Mission to the USA".

Reciprocal Blessings

By The Rev. Jeffrey Cerar

Our SOMA team of seven went to the Virginia Theological Seminary April 8-9 to lead a retreat for the international students. By springtime they feel a great need for refreshment and encouragement, and this year the need was greater than usual because of the friction among Anglicans over doctrinal issues.

Our 24 hours together was a time of deep immersion in scripture, interspersed with times of lively worship and personal ministry time where the team and the students prayed for each other. The scripture that seemed most real to several participants was, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." We heard amazing stories of deprivation and danger where people were sustained by the presence of Jesus. One Sudanese told of fleeing with a group of villagers and losing several friends in a river torrent. He



A time of ministry.

relied on the presence of Jesus to calm him and equip him to be a leader and to minister to the fear and grief of the other refugees. "God is closer than your fear," he said.

Both the students and the SOMA team came home feeling renewed and connected, loved and upheld. The Lord brought reciprocal blessings, established new networks and shed grace upon grace. When you go to minister to others in obedience and love, God blesses you a hundred fold. ■

Team list: The Rev. Jeffrey Cerar, team leader, Mrs. Lynne Cerar, St. Stephen's, Heathsville, VA; Mr. David Barton, Christ the Redeemer, Chantilly, VA; Mrs. Deborah Chappell, Mrs. Betty Mallory, Mr. Bruce Russell, All Saints', Woodbridge, VA; Mrs. Jeannie Lienard, St. Margaret's, Woodbridge, VA.

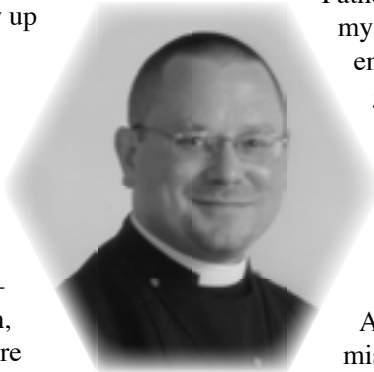
Les Martin Joins SOMA Staff

Please join us in welcoming the Rev. Canon Leslie D. G. Martin as Associate Director of SOMA USA.

Canon Martin was born in California, but grew up in Oak Ridge, TN. He pursued his BA at Saint John's College, Annapolis, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. An adult convert to the Christian faith, he received his M Div. from Seabury-Western (where he received the release of the Holy Spirit) in 1994 and was ordained in June of that year. After serving two parishes in the Diocese of East Tennessee, he received a call to Saint Martin's Church, Monroeville, in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, where he has been serving as rector for the past 7 years.

Currently pursuing his Doctor of Ministry degree from Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, Canon Martin's interests include liturgy, church history, and the release of God's people for ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Les writes: "two SOMA events changed my life and my ministry. The first was an international conference that I attended at SOMA's invitation. It was there that I first had my American eyes opened to the realities of the greater Anglican



Communion. It was also there that I first met my brother John Simons (now National Director of SOMA Australia) and my Father-in-God Benjamin Kwashi. The second was my SOMA trip to Accra, Ghana, where I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit moving in the global church and saw for myself what the 2/3 world faces every day. I was never the same again. Since then, my belief has been: If it can happen to me, it can happen to others too. There is nothing wrong with American Christians that ministry abroad can't change."

Active in both SOMA work and other missionary activities, he was honored by the current Primate of West Africa, the Most Rev. Justice Ofei Akrofi, in 2000 by being named an honorary Canon of the Diocese of Accra, Ghana. He also serves as Canon for Theological Education in the Diocese of Jos, Nigeria, at the behest of SOMA International Board Member, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Benjamin Argak Kwashi.

Les continues: "SOMA has been a key piece that God has used in my life as he has called me to be a global Christian. I am excited to be a part of this invaluable ministry at such a critical time in the life our church." ■

SOMA USA

*is a Christian mission agency
in the Anglican Communion
dedicated to fostering
renewal in the Holy Spirit
throughout the world.*

The SOMA USA Newsletter

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Dominican Republic (continued from page 2)

The altar call was followed by a two hour prayer ministry time. We marveled at the young people's reverence at the Sunday service The previous night's raucous worship became the morning's sweetest praise. They gave testimonies for two hours, with much weeping and joy about what God had done for them during the conference. There were thirty more hands in the air when time ran out.

Through short-term missions we have the opportunity to live out the book of Acts. Taken out of our pews, we become disciples on the road--never knowing whom we will meet, the needs to be met, or when Jesus will show up. As comfort and control are stripped away, we find our faith and our gifting. And it's tax deductible! ■

Team list: The Rev. Roger Bower, team leader, Mrs. Holly Garrett, Mrs. Catherine Gale, Church of the Holy Spirit, Centennial, CO; Mrs. Patricia Vazquez, Christ Church, Denver, CO.

Honduras (continued from page 3)

lay hands on each other, one by one, and pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The room was filled with people in small groups, some standing with their arms around each other, some kneeling to receive prayer, all seeking the power of God to minister in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

And there was a great deal of joy, laughter, sharing and openness. The Diocese of Honduras is very strong in human resources. This mission went far in building greater community and vision among the leadership as they face the uncertain times in our church under a new, vigorous bishop. God is so faithful! ■

Team list: the Rev. Dr. Robert Sanders, team leader, St. Mark's, Jacksonville, FL; the Rev. Sergio Diaz, San Miguel, Ft. Worth, TX; Mr. Richard Hines, Church of the Apostles, Fairfax, VA; Mr. José Zurita, Holy Nativity, Plano, TX.

Get In Formation

by Edwina Thomas

There is an African American pastor in our community who leads a dynamic congregation of another denomination. When the going gets tough for his flock and no way out is evident, Pastor John boldly proclaims from the pulpit: “Turn your plates over.” They understand exactly what he means: they are entering into a fast to seek God in prayer.

All of us know that we are in a mess in the Anglican Church. How grateful I am that some among the faithful seem called and anointed to be the public face of the spiritual battle. I thank Him for Diane Knippers’s life, for faithful Primates, the AAC leadership, steadfast bishops, hard-working deans and leaders of the Anglican Communion Network, and more.

But I want to address the rest of us. Looking back over the last few years, I feel like I have been on a wild roller-coaster ride of emotions—exhilarated, terrified, and scared. I read newspapers, blogs, and attend a few meetings. Through it all, I am determined to seek His face and be obedient to His Word and His leading through the Holy Spirit—and to get on with Kingdom business.

As I move around the Church, I intersect with lives like mine. This is what I think God is saying to us: you are soldiers in this army and you have very important assignments. Foremost, don’t just “read” the blogs, the newspapers, the e-mails, but PRAY. This is where the battle is won—in the heavenlies.

And FAST. The leadership of my own congregation is currently in the midst of a 40-day fast. As I participate, I am finding that this season of prayer and fasting is more difficult than usual. Perhaps that is because the stakes are higher. Will I add a tiny portion of sacrifice to my prayers?

Church, get information and get in formation. Do your part. Do not neglect the most powerful of ministries—Prayer. And “Turn your plates over.” ■

