

# 'You killed my husband and my brother, but my eyes are on Christ'



Listening to Rebecca's testimony, Athooch

OUR SISTER REBECCA is like our own body. We cannot hurt her, we are one body in Christ". This was the response of one delegate after listening to the immeasurably powerful testimony of team member Rebecca during SOMA's Leaders' Conference at Bor, South Sudan, last December.

SOMA had been invited by Bishop Moses to share with the ministry of the Diocese of Athooch, by facilitating a five-day conference for leaders, including youth leaders. A team of six were gathered, three UK members and three from South Sudan. The conference was planned to be held at St Luke's Cathedral, Athooch but was relocated to Bor Cathedral because of increased cattle raiding around Athooch. The team requested that

Intercessors, "pray particularly for the delegates that are with us, that none feel they need to run home to protect their family and cattle." Many residents of Athooch have already been displaced to neighbouring Bor, a town of 65,000 alongside the Nile, which itself has experienced tragic civil insecurity in the past. In Bor Cathedral grounds is a mass grave with a plaque of commemoration – a stark reminder of the many dead.

Before the conference at Bor started, the team travelled to Athooch Cathedral via the parish of Pagok where Stephen preached. They were greeted on the road to Athooch by a joint Anglican and Pentecostal crowd and were welcomed in the Cathedral by a dancing choir and expressions of gratitude that the team had visited. On the way back to Bor, the team drove alongside a 'vast procession' of hundreds of youths marching, in rows of four, to a brass band and singing christian songs.

### The conference

The conference delegates were drawn from across the 64 parishes of Athooch diocese, together with some from the neighbouring dioceses of

Awerial and Bor; a total gathering of about 150 people who were mainly from the Dinka tribe. Team leader Stephen reflects that, as the conference progressed, "it became clear that the main issue that we were there to address was the deeply broken, antagonistic and violent relationships between the pastoralist tribes, the Dinka, Murle and Nuer... we found that long-held mistrust, hatred and unforgiveness were deeply established. Yet after some uneasy moments we praise God that the delegates opened their hearts to us and... to the Holy Spirit... there was heartfelt repentance and forgiveness".

*"We praise God that there was heartfelt repentance and forgiveness"*

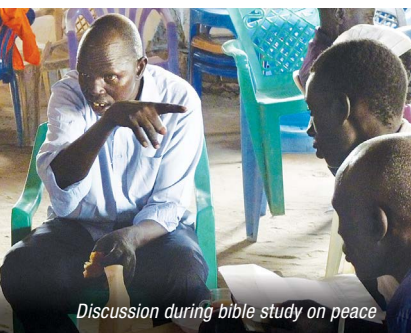
On the second day of the conference an Intercessor was given a verse from Romans 13, "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over,

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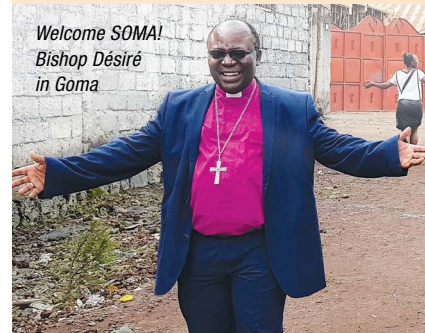
## 'We have no words to say what it means that you are here'

This was the joyful response of Bishop Désiré and his wife Mama Claudine to the arrival of SOMA's team to Goma, DR Congo, in April this year. The SOMA team of six, had travelled to Goma via Kigali, Rwanda, to facilitate a four-day conference for 120 clergy, wives and lay readers from Goma and the surrounding area. This was a joyful and exciting conference because this is a new Diocese, and this was its first conference for clergy and lay readers. 40 of the delegates were headteachers

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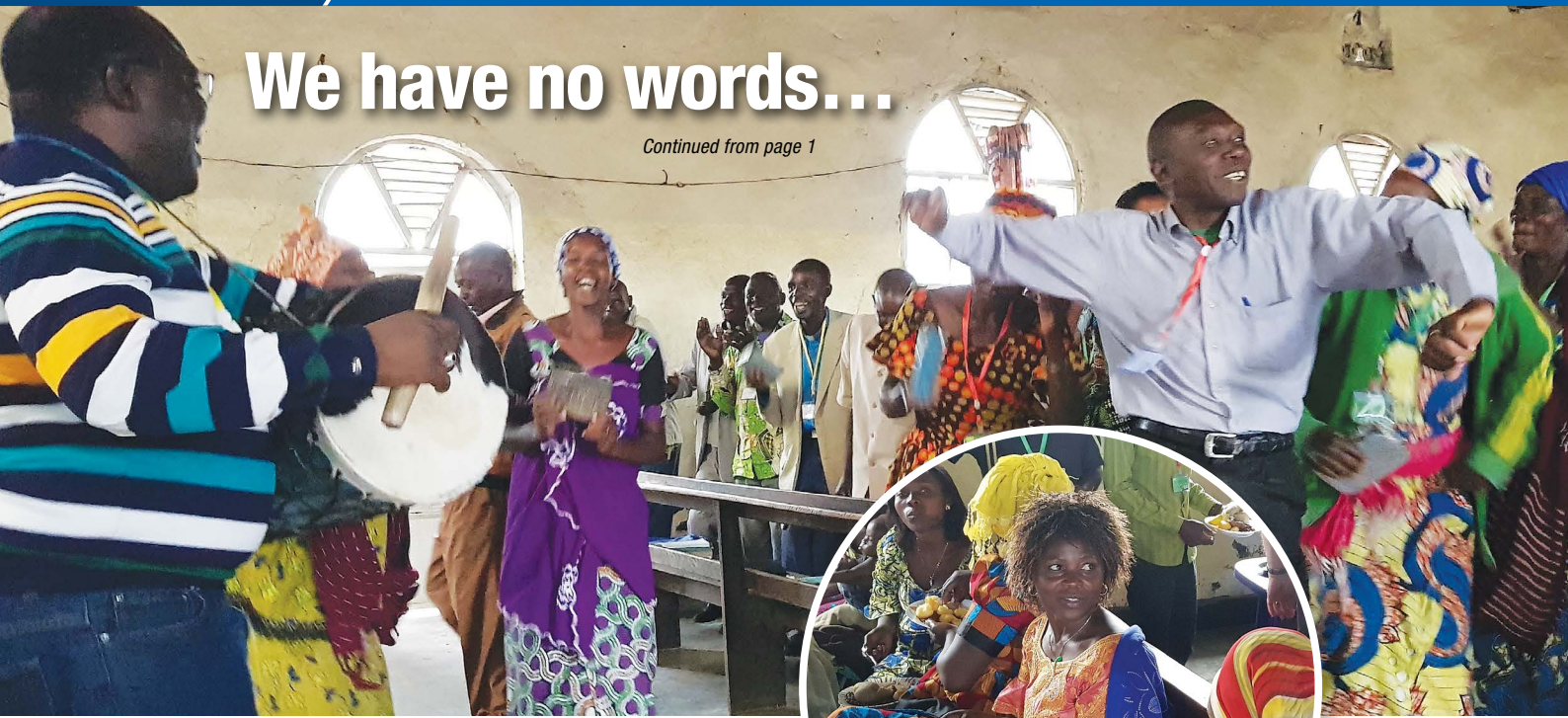
Discussion during bible study on peace



Welcome SOMA!  
Bishop Désiré  
in Goma

# We have no words...

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*Spontaneous and energetic worship, Goma*

whom the Bishop commissioned as evangelists at the closing service. A further 20 delegates were ordinands whom the Bishop ordained on the final Sunday of the mission.

Before the conference began, one of the Intercessors was given a word about being chosen. "As I prayed about the tasks ahead for the team, the word 'chosen' came into my mind; the team have been chosen to go to Goma, the clergy and lay readers have been chosen to attend, the head teachers have been chosen to be evangelists and the ordinands have been chosen to be ordained. The scripture that resonates with me is Colossians 3: 12-14, 'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.'"

The conference began with delegates exploring Psalm 23 and then the subject of having lives centred on Jesus, along with prayer ministry. Initially there was nervousness and delegates were quiet but by the second day they were really beginning to absorb and own the teaching material, and there was much fruit. Matthew led a session on reconciliation and peace-making, including how the 'Shalom' of the Lord transforms people, which allowed sensitive exploration and healing of delegates' deep wounds. Ken led a session on christian marriage and family life, and, 'quite unknowingly' touched key issues. One outcome was that the Bishop declared that the women should receive lunch first. Benon then led a session on repentance and renewal, with prayer ministry, and was led to invite a male pastor to seek forgiveness on behalf of the men for male treatment of women. Mama Bishop was moved to tears by this. A wife then sought



*Lunch, women first! Goma*

forgiveness for the women, both of which delegates reported they found powerfully significant. The third day was 'inspiring and inspired', with sessions on walking in the power of the Holy Spirit and evangelism and traditional religion, with each session being interlinked by the Holy Spirit in

*"I have been very humbled by the whole experience"*

important ways and many delegates coming for prayer ministry. One fruit of the teaching on prayer was to see quiet praying in small groups. This was a new and rewarding experience for them. The worship was spontaneous and energetic and there was a strong sense of shared commitment. Bishop Désiré pronounced that for the new Diocese, "This is a beginning, we are on the way."

## The Spirit has blown

The final day of the conference focussed on devotion in worship. There were workshops and a closing service with the dedication

and commissioning of the ordinands and evangelists. Samuel spoke on Psalm 96 on the theme "sing a new song" which became a theme for the day. As Matthew puts it, "We have a new song, the Diocese has a new song, our faith had a new song" and concluded that, "the Spirit has blown, the Father's purposes have begun, the name of Jesus is glorified".

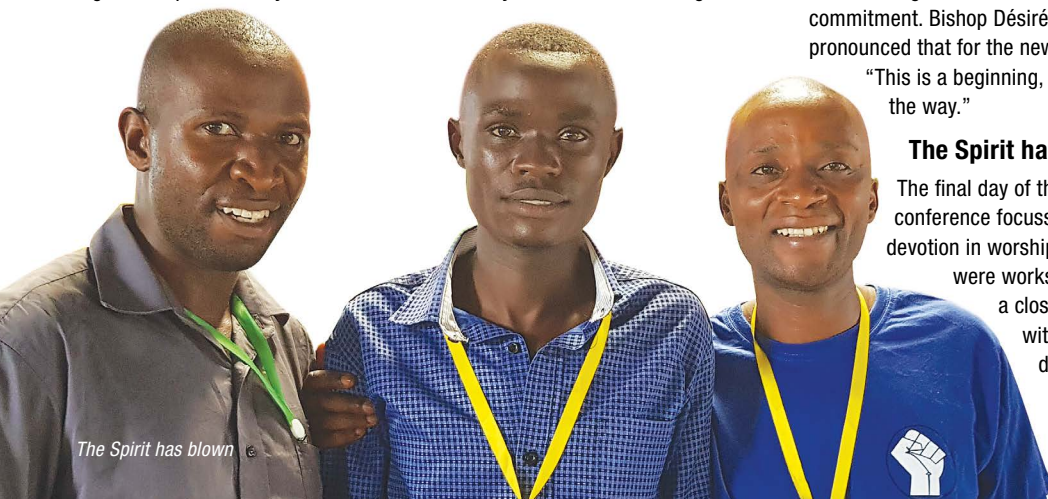
One team member reflected that, "I have been very humbled by the whole experience. People who had great faith, but so little material wealth were prepared to share everything with us."

Bishop Désiré concluded that the conference was "excellent and meaningful".

**Team Members: Rev Matthew Grayshon (Team Leader), Mrs Ro Knight, Mrs Carol Preston (UK); Rev Benon Semmambo and Rev Samuel Semmambo (Uganda); Rev Ken Wiebe (UK-Canada), intercession coordinator Sue Smith.**



*Praying in groups, Goma*



*The Spirit has blown*

## 'You killed my husband and my brother...' *Continued from page 1*

the day is almost here. So, let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light."

Then on the next day, Wednesday, the subject was Living for Jesus, with a specific session on repentance and forgiveness. It was at this point that team member Rebecca, herself a member of the Nuer tribe, spoke movingly on how her husband and now her brother had been killed by the Dinka, yet she felt that loving one another as Christians was greater than tribal loyalty and tradition. She had only found out about her brother's death on the day the team gathered together in Juba, but she chose to attend and speak to the delegates from the tribe who had killed her husband and brother, rather than go home to comfort her family. She was listened to intently, with deep respect. This was the turning point of the mission. It was clear that many delegates had themselves experienced enormous personal loss and suffering and for them forgiveness was a very real struggle. Team member Ron observed the delegates' response to Rebecca's story. He says, "Yet an older man, face disfigured with depth of anguish in his eyes which is tormenting to behold, says, 'But I can't forgive', and he is still bleeding inside. He has seen too much."

### Passionate discussion

On Thursday there followed passionate discussion among the delegates about peace and forgiveness as the bible study groups fed back into the main meeting. The team saw that overnight attitudes had begun to be changed, with most delegates recognising that

they had to find ways to forgive. One concluded that, "Our sister Rebecca is like our own body. We cannot hurt her; we are one body in Christ", while another delegate said that, "We are here to forgive and be people of reconciliation".



Lunch time! Athocho

Another prayed, "God, give life to the heart of all who disturb us".

During the conference, an Intercessor had a picture based on Revelation 1. She saw, "Jesus standing among the golden lampshade... He is walking in the middle of the destruction and chaos of South Sudan... reaching out hands to all peoples and speaking into the hearts of pastors, women and youth leaders". Through the Holy Spirit the testimony of forgiveness and reconciliation spoken by Rebecca continued to work in the hearts of the delegates during the next day, with the result that the group from the Diocese of Aweril said, "We'll come with you to the Murle [the adjacent cattle raiding group] as you Rebecca came to us." One member of the clergy speaking of a congregation to which he had been sent but had

declined said, "Like Jonah I have dodged the call, but at Thursday's bible study the message came to me to 'go to that church' – I accept, I will go". Team member Evans reflected that, "They have taken peace very seriously – they are hungry now they want real peace".

On Friday one Intercessor had a sense that the Holy Spirit was saying, "Our calling is to be servants of Light... to share with Christ the pain and sufferings of His people. To bring them into the light where there is healing, freedom and the gift of life itself..."

Bishop Moses summarised the conference well by saying, "In South Sudan we are all mourners – you have comforted us, you brought people together".

*"You have comforted us, you brought people together"*

SOMA's thanks go to the Intercessors who sacrificially played such a vital protective and prophetic role during this mission, and to Bishop Moses for his integrity and his loving and discerning leadership.



We will go to them, Athocho

**Team Members: Rev Stephen Dinsmore (UK); Evans Gogonya (South Sudan); Kate Brankin (UK); Rev Charles Alfred William (South Sudan); Rebecca Nyaphom Gatdin (South Sudan); Rev Ron Hart (UK). Intercessor coordinators Kate Brankin and Stephen Dinsmore in South Sudan**



Welcome, on the road to Athocho



Prayer ministry, Maridi

## 'I want to pray every moment'

"NOW I HAVE THE BIBLE in my head. I have memorised many verses. Now I can pray in many ways and feel strong". This was how one young conference delegate reflected on the outcome of SOMA's youth conference in Maridi, South Sudan, in February this year.

SOMA had been invited by Bishop Justin Badi to return to Maridi, South Sudan after previous missions in 1999 and 2012. Bishop Justin, now the Archbishop & Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, was particularly concerned about the effect of the current civil crisis on the young people in his then diocese so, at his invitation, a team of six was assembled to lead a Youth Leaders' Workshop for young people and leaders.

South Sudan is the youngest country in the world, gaining independence from Sudan in 2011 after decades of bloody civil war and oppression. This, combined with the subsequent civil crisis resulting in massive displacement of peoples and food insecurity, means South Sudan remains one of the world's poorest states. It has the highest rate of maternal mortality globally and 90% of the population live on less than \$1 per day. In 2017 it had the highest score on the fragile states index. Up to 300,000 people have been killed in the current crisis, and 3 million displaced. In short it is exactly the sort of place to which SOMA is called.

Ahead of this mission, an Intercessor was given a picture of the team accompanied by, "a large number of beings who appeared totally golden to look at". He said, "I felt sure they were angels. They covered the team from behind and to either side.

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## 'I want to pray every moment' *Continued from page 3*

Another angel beckoned from some distance in front of the team and angelic company to proceed forward". Another Intercessor said, "I've been having a sense that the Lord is going to use the team to bring hope".

When they arrived, the team found Maridi, a town of 18,000, currently relatively at peace. Team leader Ron reflects that when he was last in Maridi in 1999 the SOMA team experienced bombing by Sudanese government aircraft and that, "it was interesting to return and pray at the tree where we sheltered in a pit".

The conference took place in the Cathedral, with 113 highly committed delegates. As well as systematic bible studies on topics ranging from Jesus' life and death, what it means to become a Christian, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness and taking our pain to the cross, the delegates tackled important topical issues such as christian marriage, leadership and, importantly, issues facing youth. Delegates discussed the pressing challenges facing young people in Maridi, some of which they reported included lack of education, insecurity, a spirit of retaliation, early marriage, many war widows and orphans, and a lack of training and bible study. One delegate commented that, "there is no marriage here". Many delegates had experienced personal suffering, from the loss of parents and siblings to issues of poverty and inability to complete schooling. Ron reflects that, "there was much pain and loss under the surface". During prayer ministry most delegates received prayer, some making a commitment for the first time and some experiencing healing

or an infilling of the Spirit. One lady reflected that, "I have got the spirit of praying from the conference. I want to pray every moment. Let God bless you. I am deep in the spirit of praying".

Several delegates also experienced physical healing, and one man was joyfully consumed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Team member Lindy reflects that it was, "an incredible privilege to be amongst a proud and courageous people whose banner in the Cathedral read 'Joy', and to see that joy displayed around us despite the suffering and trauma they have had and still experience. Their 'joy' is the joy of the Lord! He is their strength."

*"God has a remnant in this beautiful though war ravaged country"*

Team member Wyclef concluded that, "God has a remnant in this beautiful though war ravaged country, and if they keep the heart to seek God and do right, South Sudan will be healed".

SOMA's thanks go to our faithful committed intercessors for their valued support during this mission. Please do keep praying for the people of this beautiful but fragile young nation, especially for the delegates who attended this conference, that they may continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit and grow in wisdom, and prayerfulness.

**Team: Rev Ron Hart (Team Leader), Creddy Hart, Lindy Cameron, Davi Guimaraes, Rev Jane Shaw, (UK); Wyclef Rushaju (Uganda). Intercession co-ordinator Kate Brankin (South Sudan).**



### Thank you

We really appreciate your continued support for SOMA. However, if you no longer wish to receive SHARING, or no longer wish us to hold your personal details on our database, please email us at info@somauk.org and we will update our database accordingly. Please see our website www.somauk.org for the full privacy statement.

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**High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts.**

Join us for great time of fellowship, teaching, prayer, worship, ministry and relaxation. Be inspired, be encouraged and ignite your passion for intercession, prayer and for mission. Hear about SOMA missions. Spend time aside with God. Enjoy great company. Book the date now!

## Come and see us at Naturally Supernatural...

...Soul Survivor's Summer Camp for everyone, 'Equipping the whole church to lead Spirit-led lives', 28 July to 2 August 2018 at the Staffordshire Showground, just outside Stafford.


Come and meet us and our guests at the SOMA stand in the 'Tool-shed'. Find out more and book at <https://naturallysupernatural.co.uk/home> We look forward to seeing you there!




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Tanzania	Rorya
South Sudan	Northern Bahr El Ghazal
DR Congo	Katanga Young Adults and Leaders
Uganda	Palorinya South Sudanese IDP camp
South Sudan	Torit
Tanzania	Dar es Salaam
Kenya	Maasailand
DR Congo	Kalemie
Rwanda	Byumba
South Sudan	Athooch
Tanzania	Tabora
DR Congo	Kinshasa
South Sudan	Youth Leaders' Workshop

 **PRAY:** Intercession and prayer are the foundation of SOMA's ministry and mission. Find today's live prayer nugget on twitter, facebook and our website under 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 'Prayer and Intercession'; or contact Kate Brankin at [intercession@somauk.org](mailto:intercession@somauk.org)

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

 **TEAM:** Come on a mission! We welcome new team members. 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 the 'Donate' button on the homepage or click on 'Get Involved' then 'Support Us'; alternatively email [steve.fischer@somauk.org](mailto:steve.fischer@somauk.org) or post direct to SOMA, PO Box 69, Merriott, TA18 9AP

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