

Reflections from Patrick Whitworth, outgoing SOMA UK Chair of Trustees



It is not a cliché to say that it has been a privilege to be part of SOMA for more than thirty years: as a Team Leader first in 1992 when I went to the Diocese of Aba near Port Harcourt in Nigeria; as a member of the Council and then for many years as a Trustee and latterly as Chair of Trustees for the last eight years. My very first involvement must have been in the mid 1980s, when as a young incumbent in South London we hosted several leaders from Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya;

others were to come to Bath and Wells later, including a SOMA team from Africa. Looking back on those experiences and the twelve teams I have been a part of, perhaps there are two things to emphasise especially.

The first is that our calling remains the same even if the context changes, as it always does. The calling is fundamentally to share in the work of the Spirit as he reveals the Godhead, equips the church – and in particular leaders, and reminds, gifts and guides his followers. All these functions of the Spirit are mostly described in John's Gospel and Paul's letters but are frequently exhibited in Luke's writings, in his Gospel and the Acts. These documents must be our charter, and the place from which we gain our understanding of how the Spirit works. What is so often needed is an appreciation of who the Spirit is and what he does, clarity in teaching and opportunities to receive. SOMA can and does provide that model. Indeed frequently, following teaching from the scriptures, there have been times to lay sorrows, sins and burdens at the cross, take opportunities for reconciliation where there is bitterness or even hatred and pray for healing and hope in stubborn and broken situations. And the Spirit has come, and does come; bringing repentance, tears and release.

The second thing to emphasise is that we are called to share. It is a sharing on many levels. It is a sharing with other team members: maybe of our fears and sense of inadequacy, or about more practical things like insects in our rooms, strange noises at night or a diet which does not resemble 'the packet of cornflakes' at home. **Then it is sharing ourselves with our hosts: not staying apart like some remote leader but immersing ourselves in the feelings and questions of those we meet, being close-by for the short time we are together.** I will remember standing in Bauchi by the cathedral with the bishop who had invited us, looking at his cathedral. It had been burnt down in religious riots a year previously. It was a ruin. **We shared a little of his pain. We prayed for the future. We met the Christians. We shared about the power of the Spirit and the rebuilding story of Nehemiah.** It was very little, but I dare to think that like the loaves and fishes it was multiplied in the hands of Christ.

Yes, it has been a privilege, informing and enthusing my ministry in the UK and bringing a smile to my face – recalling the memories shared in fellowship with our sisters and brothers abroad.

*Patrick has recently published (January 26 2023) his latest book *Witness of Struggle: Telling Tales of a Rambling Rector*. 400pp. Available through Amazon from £18.*

Hopes from Kevin Roberts, incoming Chair of Trustees



I feel very honoured to be the next Chair of the SOMA UK Trustees. Do pray for me that I can do the role justice and help to serve SOMA UK well in this new season of its life under Richard's leadership as our National Director. Patrick has done a great job as my immediate predecessor, and we are indebted to him for his wise and thoughtful oversight over his many years as a Trustee and latterly as our Chair. Thank you, Patrick. I also have some great Trustee

colleagues and we look forward to adding to our number over the course of the next year.

I am passionate about the work of SOMA UK. I have seen at first hand the difference that a SOMA team can make in dioceses and churches in some of the places least visited that I have had the privilege of going to over the last 25 years. I also know how transforming, even life changing, it can be to be a SOMA UK team member and to share life for a short while with sisters and brothers on our overseas missions. Our ministry has been valued and eagerly requested for nearly 45 years and we believe that **SOMA UK still has God's mandate for an ongoing work within its calling to join the Holy Spirit in tending the nervous system of the Body of Christ. We look forward to growing and diversifying our ministry in the years ahead, as the Holy Spirit leads.**

There are some big challenges facing SOMA UK at the moment. The cost of taking overseas teams has increased significantly since the period of the pandemic and we need to increase our income to fund a growing work and also source some new funding streams. We need to add to the existing cohort of excellent team leaders and catch the imagination of younger leaders to want to be part of SOMA UK and to come on mission with us. We have a small staff team and will need to on-board committed volunteer leadership for aspects of our ministry if we are to extend the scope of our work. And we need to reassure church leaders in the Global South that we are still trusted partners who share their commitment to scriptural orthodoxy and renewal in the power of the Holy Spirit.

More than ever, though, this new season is a time of great opportunity for us. Just as the house owner in Jesus' parable brings out of their storeroom new treasures as well as old, we look forward to discovering new ways of tending the nervous system of the Body of Christ and new ways of inhabiting our calling and living in our mandate, alongside all that has served us well in the past. Please pray for the SOMA UK staff and Trustees that we'll keep our eyes on Jesus, be faithful to our heritage and, with courage, follow the *ruach* of God, the wind of the Spirit, into whatever new territory He takes us.

Kevin Roberts became Chair of the SOMA UK Trustees in January 2023. Kevin is a former Vicar, Archdeacon and Cathedral Canon and, until his retirement in October 2021, was Director of ReSource for Anglican Renewal Ministries, SOMA's partner ministry in the UK. He lives in Shrewsbury with his wife Anne.

Spotlight on South Sudan



*MAIN: Richard with Martha and Mala, South Sudanese team members from Uganda
RIGHT: Richard Moy and Doug Ingram of Relay Trust meeting with Archbishop Justin Badi Arama and other senior clergy*

In January the first SOMA team went out to South Sudan to begin the series of youth missions there. Logistically this mission was really hard to pull together, we were so aware we were in a battle and that God wanted to do some wonderful things among the youth and youth workers in South Sudan. The series of missions is a beautiful vision that Archbishops Justin Badi Arama and Samuel Peni have borne to equip the next generation of leaders to bring transformative change through the Holy Spirit in their nation. We are very grateful to have been supported by the Relay trust in this and Richard was able to fly out with one of their team to go and meet Archbishop Justin Badi and some of the senior

clergy in South Sudan. Richard got to spend a couple of days there observing their work, particularly using SEAN material to grow disciples in the Anglican Church.

One of our intercessors said organising missions is not very good for the nerves but excellent for the life of faith, and that has certainly been our testimony! Don Brewin keeps reminding us that, 'it will emerge...' and the intercessors network again provided the prayer cover to make that happen. The SOMA team on the ground in South Sudan was a mix of people from SOMA's South Africa, led by Reverend Buli who is board member for SOMA South Africa. On her team was her husband Bruce, leader of Growing the Church



SA, another renewal movement and Koliwe also from South Africa. Richard joined for a few days and two South Sudanese, Mala and Martha, who have been living in and serving in the refugee camps in Kiryandongo, Uganda.

The team was hosted by Archbishop Samuel Peni in Yambio and Archbishop Stephen Dokolo in Lui. The conferences brought together between 90 and 120 youth leaders from each of the provinces and teaching centred on evangelism and discipleship. Richard taught on Character, Competency and Calling using the life of Gideon.



ABOVE: Using the Growing Leaders/ARROW Course material from CPAS and the life of Gideon to think through who gets the glory from our ministry?

BELOW: Doug speaking to senior clergy team in Juba



Thoughts from Richard:

On the way back from South Sudan in January I found myself in Addis Ababa airport waiting for a connection. Across the airport waiting area was Archbishop Samy Fawzy Shehata, the Archbishop of Alexandria in Egypt. He was coming back from Chad one of many nations in his Anglican Province. We realised we would see each other in London a week later when he was coming as a guest observer to the General Synod and I was acting as a Chaplain.

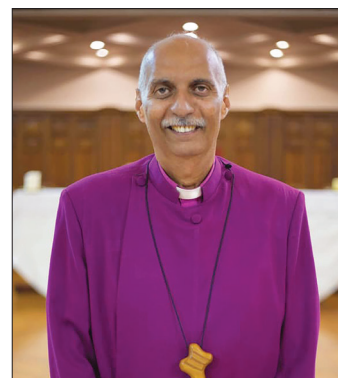
It was a joy to see him at Westminster a few days later, and yet sobering to hear him speak to Synod. Archbishop

Samy warned the English delegates powerfully that “crossing this line of blessing same-sex unions will alienate 75% of the Anglican Communion” and “lead eventually to impaired and broken communion”, a view underlined by Martin Warner, the Bishop of Chichester, who stated that this process will “undermine trust within the Anglican Communion and be seen in some of the poorest countries of the world as a new imperialism”.

This quickly proved to be the case as the Chair of Global South Fellowship of Anglicans and Chair of SOMA

International, Archbishop Justin Badi Arama, issued a press release reiterating ‘the well-established view that Anglican liturgy expresses its doctrine’ and that GSFA will be taking decisive steps towards re-setting the Anglican Communion. Canterbury will no longer be ‘first among equals’ when that happens. These steps are now underway.

Part of SOMA’s calling in tending to the nervous system of the body of Christ is to make sure that where pain exists the whole body realises it. Kevin Roberts, as Chair of Trustees, and I, as National Director, have written to the leaders of the churches in the Global South to assure them of our ongoing



Archbishop Samy Fawzy Shehata

partnership and that, as we continue our journey of learning from the churches around the Communion, we will continue to amplify their voices where they have been too easily forgotten. You can find the full text of our letter on the SOMA UK website and on our Facebook page.

Fresh eyes

As Grace heads into Maternity Leave she reflects on the importance of Intercession in SOMA

Five months into my role here at SOMA, and I’m temporarily hopping off board to have a baby. We knew when I began that I didn’t have a huge amount of time to put my skills into action, but God has highlighted needs that I can meet, and I now know where I fit within the team.

Being so new, one thing I was able to bring immediately was an outside perspective; I had to learn what SOMA is all about now, as well as recognising the rich history that has brought us to this moment. It was clear that whilst many dedicated prayer warriors were continually paving the way in faith for us, and countless others have returned again and again to join us in mission, the post-covid era had left uncertainty hanging in the air.

We work with a God who laughs in the face of uncertainty, and what I have seen is that SOMA is a charity who knows that. Whilst we on

earth face improbabilities, or even impossibilities, in finance, logistics, time... our God in heaven has provided.

I wrote in a recent blog post on our website that prayer is fundamental to what we do, and it is this I have come back to almost every time I have been working. People pray, and a miracle follows. When the team feels discouraged, God steps in and lifts our heads, no doubt because we are so much more than just the staff team - we are a network of intercessors, of missionaries, and Holy Spirit-filled hearts with a common goal.

I have delighted in speaking with those who are a significant number of years ahead of me, who have come to zoom prayer meetings, and built our tiny team up in faith. Each of these individuals is a treasure trove of stories of God’s goodness, and the snippets I’ve heard have left me hoping I can be that faith-filled throughout my life.



The SOMA UK team, left to right: Monique Reichberger, Anita Long, Grace McSharry, Richard Moy at their most recent team meeting.

As a staff team, we have been working out how to get younger people on SOMA mission trips, and our META Youth programme and links with New Wine have been excellent first shoots. However, what will truly inspire my millennial generation and younger to follow in SOMA team members footsteps is hearing and seeing their faith

and their stories.

I pray for a bridging of this generational gap, and that the treasure from these more experienced missionaries can be placed directly into the hands of people like me, inspiring us to take even bolder steps and to share the good news of Jesus with the lost and hurting.

Spotlight on South Sudan SOMA International:

upcoming!

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Revd Buli said:

"There have been many salvations and healings. Continue to pray that the people are responsive to the message, and that hearts are softened. Outer/rural areas have a strong influence and belief in witchcraft. Pray for the challenges they have with unemployment, and lack of funds for some to continue with their studies. We had some deliverance sessions today and God was at work. We thank God for their openness. This has been a fruitful time, young people in Lui said they have never had this type of training before - it was a first for them."

Mala said:

"This is a testimony from a youth called Joseph. When we went to train in Western Ekuatoria we taught about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the lifestyle of Jesus, and character. He stood up and said he used to not want to work for the church, for the ministry of God, because he had been proud. One night he was sleeping and he had a prophetic dream, when he awoke he said enough is enough he had been dodging the call to work as a youth coordinator in the diocese but now as he goes back he is going to surrender his life and accept this position and is ready to work for God. He called me this week and said he is starting his job. I have received lots of similar testimonies over the weeks after the mission."



Joseph

Martha said:

"The conference was really good, first of all it strengthened our faith as Christians and also the young people we met said that too. It created for us a lot of new friends and connections, the teams that came from South Africa and the UK are really humble and related really well with us, thanks also to Richard for his help organising, the youths here are keen to do more things like this."



Worship in Yambio

We'd love to invite you to join us in Ireland! Plans are well underway for this mission, come and join in with what God is doing in parishes across Down and Dromore, sign up and a video invite from Bishop David here: somauk.org/irelandmission We're looking for up to 150 team members to join this mission, serve alongside local leaders, be inspired and return to their home parishes with a new zeal for mission and intercession. Training will be provided.

In April, Richard will be in Rwanda with all the other SOMA International National Directors for board meetings, planning and follow on missions in Rwanda and surrounding countries. Do pray for them as they prepare for that.

There are other missions in the works such as Uganda, Lebanon, Tanzania, and the DRC - please pray as we balance listening to God's call and the logistics of following it! Pray particularly for the following South Sudan missions in the series now they have launched, pray for the right team leaders, dates, teams and funding.

Opportunities for Zoom missions!

One area of ministry we have been interested to explore as travel costs soar is what can we do online? National Director Richard was recently invited to speak at an outreach in a South Asian nation. The young tech savvy leaders WhatsApp video called him as they travelled 60km on mopeds from their urban base, and then set up a zoom call so he could speak to a gathering of 50-60 God-seekers. They sent back some incredibly encouraging stories of blessings including many healings and converts. Let's keep praying for churches operating in difficult locations and for wisdom in how to use these technological opportunities going forward.

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