

## ABOUNDING IN EVERY GOOD WORK: Impact of a SOMA Mission Five Years Later

In 2016, a SOMA mission team traveled to the southern region of Malawi to minister in the Diocese of Upper Shire. The team was requested because the local bishop had heard how God was using SOMA in spiritual renewal and encouragement for clergy in other parts of the country.

After returning home and reflecting on that mission, SOMA team leader Fr. Roger Grist, Rector of St. Anne's in the Diocese of Fort Worth, shared: "Our team's goal was for the attendees to experience the power of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit. We found that the Holy Spirit began to soften the hearts of those who were a bit skeptical of our message. We began to see the Lord working with these clergy. As the week went on, more and more clergy came up for special prayers and ministry. We sensed that many of them were going to return to their congregations with a renewed passion for Jesus, a new trust in His power through the Holy Spirit, and a revitalization of their energy for ministry." \*



2016 SOMA clergy conference in the Diocese of Upper Shire

The Rev. Dyson Chombo of St. Matthew's Church was one of the clergy who was transformed through SOMA's teaching, witness, and prayer ministry. Renewed by the Holy Spirit, he later shared with his bishop, "Something happened to me when the team laid their hands on me and prayed." When Fr. Chombo returned home and preached the next Sunday, he felt a deeper empowerment and passion in his preaching, as confirmed by his own parishioners. Before he attended SOMA's ministry conference, about 100 people attended St. Matthew's regularly. Now, Fr. Chombo shepherds a congregation that has doubled in size!



St. Matthew's with the new stone and concrete bench seating—yet major problems with the roof.

Through the years following the SOMA mission, Fr. Chombo and Fr. Grist have maintained contact with each other. The people of St. Anne's have also remained inspired after hearing Fr. Grist's testimony of how God's Spirit strengthened this priest's ministry. Wanting to serve missionally, St. Anne's parishioners expressed the desire to reach out and help others beyond their own walls. Not long after,

Fr. Roger had become aware of St. Matthew's need for seating in the church building—people were sitting on the floor for their worship services. For churches like St. Matthew's in Malawi, the material needs of the people are many and basic. When Fr. Roger shared the need for seating with his people at St. Anne's, the vestry voted to support the building of more permanent concrete and stone seating.

More recently, when the roof of St. Matthew's church collapsed, St. Anne's responded generously by voting to share in the cost of replacing the roof. The relationships developed between the two churches reflect the sacrificial spirit of giving cited in 2 Corinthians 8. Even though St. Anne's parishioners are paying off the cost of their own roof replacement, the congregation has been moved by the Holy Spirit to give to God's people in greater need.

The blessings and the relationships fostered through SOMA's missions to the worldwide Anglican Church reach down to God's people in local parishes. According to Fr. Grist, "I believe this project gives our people a wider vision of our connectedness to the Body of Christ around the world." The people of St. Anne's rejoice and feel blessed that they have walked along-side Fr. Chombo and his congregation in southern Malawi. "And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work ... You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God" (2 Corinthians 9:8).



Parishioners worshipping in their restored church building, thanks to the relationships formed through with the people of St. Anne's



**SOMA's**  
**PASTOR TO PASTOR**

Virtual Series

**"Staying Focused in Ministry  
for the Long Haul"**

Session 1: November 3

**The Rt. Rev. Dr. Trevor Walters**

Session 2: February 2

**The Rt. Rev. John Guernsey**

Session 3: Date TBD

*For church leaders interested in learning more about the series, please contact Kyle: [kyle@somausa.org](mailto:kyle@somausa.org)*

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## “FOR GOD IS WORKING IN YOU...”

It's been a year and a half since SOMA developed the virtual Pastor to Pastor series in response to travel restrictions brought by the pandemic. In June, we continued the series by bringing the Rev. Canon Dr. Ashley Null to speak to pastors. From his experience as a parish priest and chaplain to Olympic athletes, Canon Null presented words of great comfort and encouragement for clergy ministering amid the challenges of Covid-19, the resulting isolation, and the growing influence from secular post-Christian culture.

Canon Null engaged his audience from the start by asking, “What do you think is the most common question I get from an elite athlete who has failed to win gold? ... It's ‘What did I do wrong?’” This cry comes from our fallen human nature, which has been schooled in the “performance” culture all around us. While it may be easy to imagine athletes carrying this burden of failure, he said that pastors come to him with the very same question when their ministry seems to be falling apart. However, St. Paul affirms God's role in how we move forward, whether as a pastor, athlete or layman, that we are under His care, indwelt with the Holy Spirit:



Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you.

And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (Philippians 2:12-13 NLT)

Canon Null pointed to Philippians 1:6 to reinforce the reason why pastors must reclaim complete confidence and trust in the Lord: “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (ESV). As His disciples, we are not left on our own. When pastors experience failure in ministry, each of us can be sure that our Almighty and loving God will be “an incredible steward of the pain.” Even when our ministries prosper, the Lord will prune us that we might bear more fruit (John 15:2). Either way, we can trust His promises in Ezekiel 36, take comfort that God is “training us for more usefulness in the Kingdom”, and experience the truth that Jesus is all we need.

Canon Null concluded with an exhortation to avoid the trap of comparison with other clergy. He distinguished between “comparison to establish self-importance” from our insecurity and “comparison for self-discovery.” The latter is the biblical process of discovering how God has designed each believer for the unique ministry that “has your name on it.”

***For we are his  
workmanship, created  
in Christ Jesus for good  
works, which God  
prepared beforehand, that  
we should walk in them.  
(Ephesians 2:10)***

This verse is crucial when the enemy whispers the lies about why our ministry has failed. Our part is to discern the ministry that God has called us to and gifted us for—in this, we experience the Lord's assurance and satisfaction in ministry as we fulfill those good works in partnership with Him. Canon Null said, “My joy is in my relationship with God and in doing the thing where He has placed me.” God has great works for each of us, in due season. We are like the surfer riding the wave—we must be skilled to ride the board, but it is God who creates and brings the wave, as He wills. So, “ride the wave!”

All of us in attendance were greatly blessed by the Rev. Canon Dr. Null's words of encouragement. As we expressed to him the personal impact of his teaching and sharing, he quipped, “I'm a pastor trapped in an academic career.” May the Lord continue to use Canon Null to equip and renew pastors and leaders in the Church for Kingdom work.

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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER *by Kyle Spradley*

*Psalm 37:7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him...*

"I am bringing something to you." This is the impression I received when my mind was traveling through the scriptures recently. Barak was commanded to gather Israel's army atop Mt. Tabor and wait to attack what appeared to be an overwhelming enemy. In Acts chapter 1, the risen Christ instructed the Apostles not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. In my own life, after God opened my heart in 2020 to the idea of vocational ministry, I was literally told to wait, "I am bringing something to you."

In each of these stories there was a command or instruction to wait for the Lord. Each account has its own unique circumstances, but one thing they all have in common—those involved had no idea how powerful the Lord was going to move. Barak was afraid, yet the Lord gave a superior force into his hands. The apostles could not have imagined what would happen on the day when God poured out His Spirit "on all flesh." I was taken to my knees and into a new career when God fulfilled His word to me and I was offered the position as National Director of SOMA.

I know I was called to serve God in this position, but here I am again waiting ... waiting for the mission field to open. But, just like the army atop Mt. Tabor and the disciples in the upper room, we too will wait for the Lord's timing and look expectantly for His power to send us out to do the work He has given us to do.

Love in Christ,

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