



# Sharing

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## DIOCESE OF MANDALAY, MYANMAR: Growing God's Kingdom

This summer, SOMA completed two missions to the Diocese of Mandalay under Bishop David Nyi Nyi Naing in the Province of Myanmar. The first of these provided teachings on discipleship and prayer ministry for the graduating class of the local seminary, recently re-opened as a result of SOMA's previous mission. Bishop David asked for this mission to further prepare the new graduates before being sent out to serve in the remote villages of Mandalay. The second mission was for a conference for diocesan lay ministry and education leaders, with SOMA helping the leaders understand how to work in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in their own strength and ideas. He also asked that SOMA help them in the areas of discipleship and evangelism.

Soo Arnold, SOMA team member for both Mandalay missions, describes her experience of trusting the Lord and His word to empower her during the missions.

**“What are you doing here?”** God asked this question of Elijah in 1 Kings 19. As I arrived for the mission, the enemy was whispering in my ear that I was not qualified to teach. I was also challenged by the weather, especially the heat and humidity in Myanmar. But I answered back to the enemy that I was here to share God's love with His people. I was so overwhelmed by His love for the people who came to learn and grow, it brought me to tears. Our team was concerned that, though their hearts were seeking to know more about God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, there was a huge spiritual block. The whole team felt this, so we prayed about what we were experiencing. In the coming days we witnessed the Holy Spirit flowing through the room when many repented and some came to trust Jesus for the first time. **“What am I doing here?”** I am here to share God's love!

Most of the people who attended the conference came from remote villages and from mountainous areas, travelling days to attend. And others came at great personal cost to their families. Many arrived at the conference from very difficult circumstances, having left family members who were quite ill. The hunger for God's Word among these people was powerfully evident.

God's hand is certainly upon the country of Myanmar. We learned from Archbishop Stephen Than (Province of Myanmar) that there are now fifty parliament members who are Christians. The Archbishop participates in Bible study with them regularly, and the government is becoming more tolerant of Christians. It is clear that God is on the move to expand his Kingdom in Myanmar!

Team List: Glen Petta, TL; Soo Arnold, All Saints', Woodbridge, VA; Dr. Jimmy Chua, Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church, Pasco, WA; Rev. Joseph Yinoo, Diocese of Mandalay, Myanmar; Sara Than, Diocese of Mandalay, Myanmar.



## MALINDI, KENYA: SURPRISED BY JOY!



When Bishop Lawrence Dena requested that SOMA come to the Diocese of Malindi, he shared his desire to build a foundation of discipleship and intercession for the newly formed diocese. The mission provided a conference for sixty diocesan clergy and their wives with the goal of implementing

the Bishop's vision and bringing unity among the clergy. The SOMA team began preparations on their individual teaching assignments prior to arriving for the conference. As they met together for the team building, they continued to seek God to reveal His plan during nightly team meetings and discernment and prayer with the Bishop.

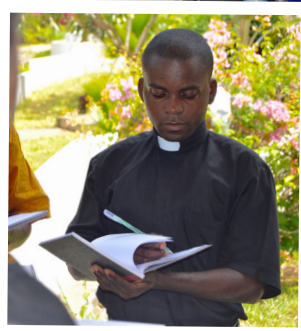
Team member Jane Parrott reflected on this mission experience. "I think about my fellow team members as we came together during our team meetings. I am so amazed how the Lord takes a group of complete strangers from different parts of the world, all thinking to themselves 'What could I possibly have to offer?', and molds them into a multi-cultural team with one purpose – to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to serve the people in this place. By the end of the team building, the team was knit together as brothers and sisters in Christ. One of our Kenyan team members stated, 'This team building has helped me grow outside my comfort zone. This has been one of the greatest experiences I have ever had. God has made us one.'"

The team sensed a distance and reluctance from attendees as they opened the conference. There seemed to be a wariness about why they had been taken away from their day-to-day duties. As the conference progressed, the team began to see a breakthrough and softening of hearts. One of the teachings centered on three phrases: I'm sorry, thank you and I love you. The impact on attendees soon became very clear: Wariness turned to joy. Worship was restored. Relationships were rekindled.

Twenty people had been scheduled for the diocesan intercessors training session. To the team's surprise, twice that number came, including some government representatives who wanted to learn more about intercessory prayer. Jane explained that the team was overwhelmed at the start of the session when they asked the group for their expectations for the intercession training. "We began by sharing our testimonies – our experience with intercession and stories of how we had seen answers to our prayers. We then set apart a time for anyone in the group who would like prayer. During this time, the 'students became the teachers' and waged spiritual warfare on our behalf! One thing to expect on a SOMA mission is not what you have to offer, but what God will offer to you. Your heart will be changed forever, and you will build relationships that will last for eternity in the Kingdom of God."

One of the clergy who had participated in the conference told the team upon leaving that they had never experienced anything as "powerful" as this. Attendees felt "equipped for ministry, spirit filled and revived." Another priest said, "We have experienced revival!" – a direct answer to the prayers of the team. Bishop Dena blessed the team with a word of thanksgiving for SOMA's ministry and a vision of hope for his new diocese. "The SOMA team you selected for us was perfect. They did a very good job, and there is positive talk going on now among the clergy of the diocese. Something new is going to happen in the Diocese as a result of the conference's impact."

Team List: Rev. Russell Martin, TL, Christ the King Anglican, San Diego, CA; Jane Parrott, St. Peter & St. Paul, Arlington, TX; Bill Parrott, St. Peter & St. Paul, Arlington, TX; Cindy Yankee, Christ the King Anglican, San Diego, CA; Rev. Editon Ombisa, Diocese of Makeni, Kenya; Rev. Faith Mbithi, Diocese of Makeni, Kenya.



# DIOCESE OF UPPER SHIRE, MALAWI: NEW GROWTH IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

We often pray for the Lord's will in opening doors for His purposes and missions around the world. As it happened, a friend of SOMA, Bishop Fanuel Magangani of the Diocese of Northern Malawi, recommended SOMA to another Malawian bishop. Bishop Brighton Malasa of the Diocese of Upper Shire was seeking training for his clergy to be more effective in their day-to-day ministries and requested that a SOMA team come to his diocese in southern Malawi for a three day conference.

The conference was held at the Chilema Center, named for an unusual tree of that region called the Chilema tree. The team was prompted by the Holy Spirit to pray for revival and supernatural growth among attendees – in the manner of growth of this unusual tree: it grows in all directions, unpredictably! They prayed that the clergy would be released from their comfort zones and experience God in a new way through this conference.

Team leader, Fr. Roger Grist, described the team's experience: "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 related to the topics we were sharing with the group.

"At the end of our time with them, we were blessed by the testimonies of how God had touched them, what God had showed them, or what God was doing in their lives. 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 His Spirit, and a revitalization of their energy and passion for ministry.

"Revived by the teachings and ministry, the clergy would be able to impact many more people than we could possibly have reached had we simply gathered the people of their congregations in one big meeting. We were blessed to be able to train the 'equippers' of the saints to whom they would return after our conference."

It's not often the team hears of specific results of their mission. But in this case, word came soon after the mission through Bishop Fanuel Magangani. He was visiting with a priest from Upper Shire and asked him about the conference. The priest told him "something happened to (him)" during the mission when he received prayer. When he returned home and preached the next Sunday, he felt a deeper empowerment and passion as he preached the sermon. The people from the congregation came up afterwards and said, "Father, what happened to you since last Sunday? That was a powerful sermon!!" Thanks be to God for the encouragement of hearing the impact of the Holy Spirit at work during the conference!

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## **DIRECTOR'S CORNER** by *Dr. Glen Petta*

SOMA team members return from mission with a variety of experiences, as I'm sure you might imagine. Whether you're involved in mission around the world – or down the street – you may be encouraged to read this personal reflection from one who participated on a SOMA mission this summer.

As I prepared for my SOMA mission, I tried to balance my expectations. On the one hand, I knew that it is best to go on mission with few expectations, as it keeps us flexible to the Holy Spirit's leading. But on the other hand, I truly was expecting God to "show up" in power and might and that I would see Him at work in some amazing way. And I was even holding onto the idea that maybe I would get to participate in God's showing up, through praying for or ministering to someone. Indeed, the Holy Spirit guided us in many ways on the mission, and it was important to stay flexible and open to follow His prompting. But the mission revealed more to me about a deep expectation that I had of what it should look, sound or feel like when God works through us.

Showing up, leaving an offering of teaching, prayer, and encouragement – and then leaving all of the results to God – is something I knew in my head as the purpose of our mission. But it was not until I went to a diocese where people are reserved in their worship and sharing that I truly had to learn it with my heart. The very faithful, studious clergy received gratefully and graciously everything we offered. However, the feedback, requests for prayer and participation in ministry were not as evident of God's power as I had heard they be. I was moved by the Holy Spirit's power and presence, but – by all outward appearances – it did not appear that anyone we were ministering to was healed, moved or even touched in a profound way.

This is where that deep expectation I had was brought to light – what I thought the mission would look like. Also, here is where the Lord revealed something to me. What I have come to believe the Lord wanted to teach me on this mission is to truly know in my heart what obedience looks like. The results, the outward encouragement, even the feeling that I have done a good job on the mission, are not mine to claim. All that is mine to claim is the peace in knowing that I obeyed. Everything else is the Lord's. In His grace, he still provided encouragement through evaluations from attendees at the conference, as well as post mission conversations and feedback. But I cherish more the peace of knowing I obeyed.

